



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES

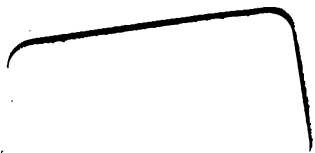


3 3433 07604253 4

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS



MARY J. TABER



Taken

N B.

11/27/11
89

Bathsheba's Letters

to

Her Cousin Deborah

1831-1861

By

Mary J. Taber

Author of "The Cathedrals of England," "Bells: an
Anthology," "Just a Few Friends," etc.

Philadelphia

The John C. Winston Company

1913

113

12

113

396488A

Copyright, 1913
By MARY J. TABER
Published June, 1913

ROY VAN
JUN
1913

GENTLE READER:

Please do not say with Disraeli, "I give hearty assurance I will waste no time in reading this volume," but follow the example of Jerry Junior's German Professor, who pronounced it "full worthy on my self-shelf upset to become, for it gives me right powerfully my own little young life to overthink."

28 X 504

FOREWORD

If Chatterton could find a collection of ancient poems in a quaint oaken chest in the muniment room of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, why may I not find a bundle of old letters in a brass-studded hair trunk in the cobwebby garret of Deborah's lonesome country home?

It would appear from these letters that Bathsheba's parents were strict Friends (or Quakers so called), leading a very secluded life in another ancient farm house not far distant.

Bathsheba must have been a child of overflowing sensibility and overmastering inquisitiveness, qualities so foreign to her parents' natures that they conscientiously but injudiciously repressed them on all occasions. The watchword of the Society is "Equanimity," but

FOREWORD

what could this jolly sprite comprehend of that virtue?

We can see from the first childish little letter, printed in staggering capitals, when she was six years old, how early George Fox's doctrine that the soul's devotion is due, not to the creature, but to the Creator *alone*, had been stamped on her infant mind, and how her affectionate heart revolted from such narrowing restraint.

We gather from the letters that while still a schoolgirl she married a man who idolized and indulged her throughout their lives, but neither over-repression nor over-indulgence could change her loving nature.

At first the letters are written child fashion to her near neighbor whom she sees every day, their postoffice being a hollow tree. Later on, during her absence in boarding schools and in Mexico. When she returns home Deborah has gone away to teach school and remains

FOREWORD

at a distance until she comes to Bathsheba's home as matron of the hospital, which closes the correspondence, although they both live many years longer.

But the letters explain themselves. We will let them tell their own story of a life nearly all sunshine, clouded only by some half imaginary griefs and unsatisfied longings.

Bathsheba's Letters

Fifth Month Twentieth 1831.

Dear Cousin:

I love thee very much—More than George Fox would approve of.

Bathsheba.

Third Month 10th 1832.

Dear Deborah:

I want thee to come to see me. Charley is a good boy. Calista is a good girl. I am a good girl—sometimes.

Bathsheba.

Fourth Month 15th 1832.

Dear Deborah:

Mother has gone to Farmington Spring Quarter. Me and Charley eat crullers all day.

Bashy.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

8 mo. 1st, 1833.

My dear Cousin:

I am eight years old to-day. I go to meeting now. I must be good and sit still and not talk. We are all good but one man, he gets up and talks lickety-split.

Bathsheba.

6 mo. 8th, 1834.

Dear Cousin:

Mother told Charley he must not go to sleep in meeting. *Friends* do not go to sleep in meeting. Pretty soon he pounded the bench. She shook her head at him, and he asked out loud: "Don't *Friends* pound chairs?" What can we do with him?

Bashy.

Twelfth Month First, 1835.

Dear Deborah:

I am in love with Jerry, and Jerry is in love with me. I will marry him,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

because then a girl changes her name.
I want to change mine to Lonicera or
Glencora.

Bathsheba for the present.

6th month 2d, 1837.

Dear Cousin:

This morning I told mother I heard father swear. She turned as white as chalk and looked scared out of her seven senses, for Friends who swear cannot sit on the facing seat in meeting as father does, but sit way back somewhere by the door. She asked me: "Who heard him? What did he say?" I told her the clerk down at the store heard him, for he said he wanted some deviled ham. The color came back to mother's face and she said: "That is its profane name. I do not buy it, but if I did, I should say beveled ham." I think deviled ham is fine! No beveled ham for me! I am going to ask for it to-night when it is on the supper table,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

and if mother shakes her head at me I am going to say: "That is what father called it, and thee said it was its name."

As Charley says: "I bet thee three to one" that nutriment does not come on the table again. (Nutriment is a dictionary word for food or victuals, and more stylish I think.) If father wants any more deviled edibles (another word for food), he will have to go over to Jerry's to supper. Jerry's folks do not mind a little thing like that. They have to get used to it.

Mother says I am possessed. If I am possessed with devils how does thee think I can help it, unless they are cast out? Sometimes I think they *are* cast out when I have a spell of goodness, then I am tempted and whew! they are all back again in a jiffy. But they never come around when I am with thee or Jerry. Queer isn't it?

Doesn't thee think Jerry is pretty cute? When teacher asked him "What made

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Leap Year," he answered right off just as if he knew the astronomy from end to end or had written it himself, "The President's election." Teacher laughed and said: "I fail to see the connection." "Why," said Jerry, "Leap Year is every year that can be divided by four, and so is the election." The teacher said: "That is not the reason, but it is bright of you to observe the coincidence." I wrote down coincidence on my slate, so as to remember to tell mother that Jerry got credit for a coincidence; for it always puts her in good humor to hear anything nice about Jerry. Charley says he believes she thinks more of Jerry than she does of her own children. She says if she does she has good reason, for Bashy is bright but not good, Charley is good but not bright, while Jerry is both bright and good.

This is the longest letter I ever wrote, pretty long for a small girl only twelve years old, but I am going to write

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

books when I am a woman, and teacher says: "Practice makes perfect." I can't practice on any one but thee. Of course I write compositions in school, but writing about Hope and Tribulation, and Sincerity and Friendship don't amount to a row of pins. I do not want to write like Hannah More, I am going to write pieces like Rip Van Winkle, though I can probably do better than that, when I get agoing. At any rate they will not be moral, for I hate that tacked on to the end of a story.

Thy loving

Bashy.

10 mo. 15th, 1837.

Dear Cousin Deborah:

There are lots of things that children, and in particular *Friends'* children, must not know about. I am going to find out some of them. Will thee help me hunt? When people say little pitch-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

ers have great ears, they mean us; then is the time to listen.

Babies are mysterious things.

I am tired of reading good books. These are some of the books I am tired of: "Piety Promoted." "No Cross, No Crown." "Barclay's Apology." "John Woolman's Journal," and some of the Bible. I am willing to read in the Bible about talking snakes and asses, and bears that come out of the woods and eat up children, and a coat of many colors, and getting sold into Egypt, and drowned in the Red Sea, and men in fiery furnaces and lions' dens, and a whale that swallows a man, for that is exciting, but all that prophesying part does not do me a mite of good. If I had written it I should have left out quite a good deal. I am most interested about the lady finding little Moses in the *bulrushes*: for quite likely they found me in the same way. Now father's *bull* gets mad and *rushes* at a red cloth, but

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

that would be no place to find a baby,
it would be trampled to death. I cannot
see into it, can thee?

Bashy.

1st month 20th, 1838.

Dear Deborah:

I like to sit with thee in meeting
because thy mother lets me braid her
shawl fringe. Mother cuts the fringe
off her shawls and binds them plain.
Anyway she would not let me braid
fringe in meeting. She is more stricter
than aunty. She does not like to have
an eel sit beside her, but aunty does
not mind if I do wiggle the least little
bit.

When mother gets moved up onto the
high seat I can sit with thee every
First Day and every Fifth Day, for they
don't promote any little girls into the
gallery.

To-day I picked about forty hundred
hollyhock cheeses. They are pretty,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

pretty things. So white and round and scalloped. They look good enough to eat, but they are not. I don't see how the hollyhocks make them, all just alike and wrap up every one in green paper with a twist on top just like candy. Let's watch and see if we can catch them at it. They must have something like a biscuit cutter to work with.

Father has got a new way of dodging questions. When I ask him one he asks me one. To-day he said: "A hop vine always twists one way and a bean vine always twists the other way. What is the reason?"

I do not know, maybe he does not either, maybe he does not know everything like I thought he did. Maybe that is what the preacher means when he talks about "poor fallible man," maybe he means poor failable man. But maybes do not account for everything, for I know father and mother could answer some of my questions if

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

they chose to, for father always winks at mother about babies. Sometimes he throws back his head and roars when I plan a new plan for getting them down from Heaven.

Bathsheba.

11th mo. 6th, 1838.

Dear Cousin Deborah:

I had a "heart to heart talk" with mother to-day, or I set out to have one. I told her I was growing wickeder every day, for now I am "cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in to saucy doubts and fears." I read that in a book mother told me never to open. She said: "What ails my child? I never heard such talk. I shall have to send thee to bed without thy supper if thee does not stop right now." So that was the end of my heart to heart talk with mother. I am glad *our* talks do not end in that way.

I have been thinking of a picture

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

I found in the garret, way behind a chest under the eaves. It is a lady with something around her head like the rings around the planet Saturn in the Astronomy. I do not see how she keeps it on, for there is no elastic under her chin or under her back hair, and why does she want to wear it. It will not keep off the sun or the rain, and she has a baby all undressed in her lap. It will catch cold if she does not put some clothes on it, and by the way-off look in her eyes she is thinking about something else.

It is hard work to think things, but it can be done. I am trying to find out about that picture. I took an astronomy out of the bookcase and it says Saturn's rings are held in place by centripetal and centrifugal attraction. Webster says centripetal pulls towards an object, centrifugal pushes it away, and when they are equal there is a state of equilibrium, and equilibrium means it

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

stays put. That may be true about stars, but it will not work with clothes. I do not believe that is the way the lady keeps her head dress on.

Bathsheba.

P. S. Mother has just told me I am such a peculiar child she and father have made up their minds it will be best to send me away to a boarding school in a year or two. I shall be glad to go. I can find out more away from home. Maybe the other girls' mothers are not so private.

Ninth Month Twentieth, 1839.

Dear Deborah:

I heard a story to-day which proves I am not the only one who asks questions and gets shut up. A boy said: "Father, who made God?" This father acted just as other fathers do when children want to see into things and said: "Hush, George!" But George did not

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

hush, he was bound to have the last word, so he kept on: "Must have been a pretty smart man I think." I had often thought of asking that question myself, but had never done it. Anyway I should not have made the last remark, for God made man, so of course what he made cannot make him. A boy in our First Day school was asked who made him, he said: "Nobody, I just happened along by myself." That is not true about the boy for God made him, but it may be true about God. There was no one capable of making him, and there was need of him, and he happened, or as we might say made himself. I remember a man preaching about "a self existent God," maybe that is what he meant. I wonder if Jesse Kersey would like to hear me say that, or would he be shocked? I never can tell beforehand which it is going to be. Sometimes he smacks his lips and clucks his tongue and says: "I like that,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

that is original," and sometimes he frowns and says: "Tut, tut, that is blasphemy." But I do not see any difference in what I have said, I do not mean any harm either time, and it is just what I think both times.

Well; Deborah, in a short time I shall be in a Boarding School, then people will ask me questions, and I shall have to answer or hang my head and feel ashamed of my ignorance. I cannot say to the teacher as my mother does to me: "What ails thee? I never heard such talk, I shall have to send thee to bed without thy supper if thee does not stop right now." Anyway I shall have a book to find my answers in before they can ask me the questions, and if there is any good in study I will be ready for them every time. I do not intend to be a laughing stock.

Farewell from

Bathsheba.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

2d Mo. 27th, 1840.

My dear Cousin:

Here I am at Boarding School and I like it much. Did thee ever hear of a Valentine? I do not suppose thee ever did. Our mothers would be sure to think it was somehow against the Discipline, and that it would be wicked for me to tell thee about it, but I am going to do it. If it is wicked I shall be punished after I am dead, but likely they will forget all about it before that time comes, or if it is written down, maybe the recording angel will blot it out with a tear as I have read he does once in a while. If he keeps on weeping over my account book what a blotted looking thing it will be! Worse than my writing book, where I made so many ink spots while I was writing twenty times over: "Neatness is a cardinal virtue," that Friend Ketura Simpkins snapped my hand with her ugly old thumb and middle finger. It hurt so

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

the pen fell down and made the biggest blot of all.

I said *he* when I wrote about that recording angel because the poetry book I parse in (how I do hate to parse), has only men angels. I asked the funny teacher why none of the angels in the pictures had whiskers, while God had such a long beard. He looked as solemn as an owl and said: "Even a really pious man may become an angel only by a *close shave*." (On thy life don't tell mother or she will think all the ten commandments have been smashed into smithereens in one tremendous crash and send for me to come home instanter.) Among the angels are Gabriel, and Raphael, and Uriel, and Ithuriel and dozens more, but not one of the feminine gender. It must be just opposite in Heaven to what it is on earth, for thy mother and my mother are heaps more angelic than our fathers are. My father says he is pretty mad, and thy

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

father says, he is "very much tried," but it comes to about the same thing, if thy father does sit on the rising seat in meeting and my father only on the facing seat. Mother says father is as ready to bristle up his back as a porcupine. But our mothers do not scold. They only say "O Deborah!" or "O Bathsheba!" and look as if they were going to blot out our badness with a tear. Teacher says if there are no women angels he knows some angel women.

I was going to tell thee about my valentines, and it is not begun yet. I will begin now. Saint Valentine is a love-sick saint. I expect mother would not approve of a love-sick saint. She will not even say Saint Matthew or Saint Mark or Saint Luke or Saint John. She says it is enough to say the gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, and she prefers to say Scriptures of Truth, rather than Holy Bible. She

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

objects so much to calling a *mere man* a saint that once when I was a little tot and read the text of a sermon, Street John, first chapter, first verse, she let the error pass uncorrected rather than explain that St. stands for saint as well as street, consequently for a long time I believed the four evangelists were Street Preachers. This almost equals the "Consecrated crosseyed bear." (Cross I bear.)

Well, there is a Saint Valentine whether mother approves or not, and once a year he takes a day off, for a play spell and writes love letters to girls all over the world. He names his letters after himself and calls them Valentines. I presume he had a love disappointment when he was young; his girl died or married another man, and he cannot get over it, like old Cy Johnson his brain is cracked ever since. I notice when lovers are parted they do not get over it, but when husbands or wives die

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

they get another, and sometimes as mother said of Ann Golding, "before the year is up." I wonder what a year has to do with it. I looked in the Discipline and it *does* set that time. If I married Jerry and he died I would not have another husband in a year, nor a century either. Father praised me that day for studying the Discipline. I suppose I did not really deserve any praise but I take all that comes, for it is a *rara avis*. I learned that word in Jerry's Latin book, and when I told him he said: "Thee's another."

Saint Valentine is always taken that way periodical on the fourteenth of Second Month. Thee knows what periodical means. The Friends' Review is a periodical.

Besides Saint Valentine's Day there is Christmas Day the 25th of 12th month, and Easter Sunday, that is a great day for eating eggs, Sunday is the same as our First Day, and Lent, I have not

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

yet found out what day that is, but I believe it is a Catholic feast.

We have a Catholic girl here in the kitchen. She looks like other folks, only her hair is a dreadful carroty red, and she has more freckles than skin. I looked up *Catholic* in Uncle Silas' big dictionary and it said *universal*, then I looked up *universal* and it said *all*. I asked Bridget if she was *all* and she said: "Bless the sowle of ye, Miss, not by no manner o' manes, tin more, five b'ys and five gurls, and it's comin' to Ameriky ivery wan of us is." Then I asked her, "Is *that* all?" And she said: "Niver a bit, me cozens Tim, and Mike, and Pat, and Pete do be after comin' whin me and Nora airns the money to fetch 'em over the say."

Now I do wish I was clear in my mind about that word Catholic. I suppose it is my fault, but it looks to me all a muddle. I told Nurse Nabby Bean what Bridget said, and nurse said: "Yes,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH.

give them a foothold and they will overrun the country. I shall not live to see it, but thee may, when they will have a priest and a church in this city."

Oh there is such a lot of things that have to be explained to Friends' children. We have never talked any with "the World's people," and have had such "guarded, religious educations" that we do not know half that is going on in the world. I never knew about Christmas. We had presents on New Year's Day. Everywhere else they get them a week sooner, and what does thee think? There is another queer saint whose name is Saint Nicholas. One of the girls told me the night before Christmas he rides in a sleigh drawn by eight reindeer right up to the roofs of houses and goes down the chimneys and puts toys and candy in the children's stockings that are hung in a row by the fire-place so as to be handy for him. Why cannot he come in at the door? and

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

why does he never make a mistake and come down Friends' chimneys?

O Deborah! I have not told thee about my Valentines yet, and now I shall have to leave it for my next letter, for if I use any more paper it will be double postage, and though we have got cheap postage at last and only pay $18\frac{3}{4}$ cents instead of 24 cents, I have not even that much.

Thy far away cousin

Bashy.

Third Month Tenth, 1840.

Dear Deborah:

Whatever possessed mother to give me such an awful name? I know the boys and girls make fun of it and it makes me unhappy. Once I asked mother how she came to do it and she said: "It is a Bible name," as though she had settled the question forever more. I thought so is Jezebel, but I did not say it for I am learning to be wise as

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

serpents. I don't know of a worse name in the Bible unless Shearjashub Padelford has it. He, poor man, tried to improve it by marking his baggage S. J. *Padellford*; then the hackman called after him: "Mr. *Padellford* here's your *carpetbag*." Perhaps Kerenhap-puch would have been worse.

To-day I looked up Bathsheba in the concordance on the teacher's desk so I could find her in the Bible, and she was not at all nice. Not what mother would call "an exemplary character." To be sure she was handsome, and Solomon was her son. He is called the wisest man, though I do not believe he is, but she married King David after he had put her husband where he would be sure to get killed, and I expect she knew it all the time. I wish my name was Gulielma Maria Springett Penn, like William Penn's wife. I would rather be his wife than that heartless king's, though I would not like to be Penn's second wife,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Hannah Callowhill. There are any number of girls named Gulielma Maria but no Hannah Callowhill that ever I heard of. If I ever get to Heaven and have a new name, I shall ask St. Peter to let me look over his list and choose the one I like best; probably it will be Angelica.

When I wrote my last letter I was getting ready to tell thee about my Valentines. I had two, the first one began: "Thee's an angle." Now I do think after so much practice Saint Valentine ought to know how to spell angel, and if he thought because I am a Friend I would not understand the speech of the World's people if he wrote *you*, he might at least talk grammar and say "Thou art." When I read "Thee's an angle" the second time, I remembered St. Augustine did not spell properly in my English History, and I thought perhaps saints are excused from spelling. But saint or no saint I am glad I was taught to spell, for last week I spelt down the

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

whole school, girls and boys too, though that last is not much to do, for boys do not spell as well as girls. Both the captains chose me the first one, but I could not be on both sides at once, so it was proposed to toss up a cent, but the teacher said that was gambling and would not be allowed, so they gave two of the best spellers to the boys and I went on the girls' side. I guess the reason I can spell is because Susan Marriot drilled us so hard. Recollect when I spelt syzygy wrong and she said so scornful: "Thou dost not know thy a-b abs," and Tommy Gould snickered, and Jerry hit him over the head with his double slate and had to stay an hour after school, and we waited for him behind the gooseberry bushes in the garden, and walked home with him, then he walked home with us, and we might have been walking back and forth to this hour, only mother called us all in to supper and we had

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

slapjacks, and Jerry said they were most as good as slap-tommies, then we told mother all about it. She tried to scold Jerry but laughed so she couldn't, and put so many lumps of sugar in his tea that he couldn't drink it.

I must stop, and I have only told thee about the first line of my first valentine. I can't seem to get along fast, there is so much keeps coming in my head that needs to be said.

Thy affectionate

Bashy.

P. S. The girls think that the committee appointed by New England Yearly Meeting to have the oversight of this school are some of them very old fashioned. Last Fifth Day after Monthly Meeting dinner they came into the girls' school-room to examine us. After we had read awhile, one of them took my book and to show us how it ought to be done, read over where we had been reading

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

after this style: "And Natur' made a paws, an orful paws, pro-fee-tick of its eend." Abijah's daughter giggled. A committeeman who had lost all his teeth and had a long nose and turned up chin, inquired what she was laughing at. She replied: "I was thinking what a meeting there will be when thy nose and chin come together." I expect she will have some terrible punishment, perhaps a hundred lines of Paradise Lost to learn by heart. J. Milton was blind; it would have been well for us if he had been born deaf and dumb.

P. P. S. One of the girls had a really pretty Valentine. It was this:

"FOR THE 14TH OF FEBRUARY."

"No popular respect will I omit
To do thee honour on this happy day,
When every loyal lover tasks his wit
His simple truth in studious rhymes to pay,
And to his mistress dear his hopes convey.
Rather thou knowest I would still outrun

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

All calendars with Love's,—whose date always
Thy bright eyes govern better than the Sun,—
For with thy favour was my life begun;
And still I reckon on from smiles to smiles,
And not by summers, for I thrive on none
But those thy cheerful countenance compiles:
Oh! if it be to choose and call thee mine,
Love, thou art every day my Valentine,”

Just look how the poets always use the Friends' language, though I believe George Fox did not pose as a poet. (Amelia peeping over my shoulder, ejaculates: “Anything but!”) Teacher says he invented that way of talking because he thought there was danger of paying too much honor to a fellow creature by addressing him in the plural number as though he was more than one person. If he had lived nowadays he would not have needed to worry on that account.

B.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Dear Cousin:

My desk-mate looking over my shoulder says, "I beg you to write out your date. Do not disgrace your letter with figures and abbreviations. Figures are sordid and abbreviations are essentially vulgar." To satisfy Amelia's aesthetic tastes I comply with her wishes and date my letter

June the thirtieth, one thousand eight hundred and forty.

I shall not write any more about my valentines, for one of the girls has told me Saint Valentine is a myth, that means a fable. She said it was one of the boys in the other part who wrote it. I was hopping mad and declared I would never speak to one of those boys for fear it might be the one who tried to call me an angel and could not even spell a little short word like that. But there is a big boy, a man grown, large even for a man; he surely was not the

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

one, for he can spell anything, and is preparing to be a Lawyer, or a Judge, or President of the United States, or something else Great. His initials are D. A. R., and one of the girls added *ling*, and he is a darling and no mistake. All of a sudden I began to like boys better and this young man likes me and two older girls, and "we three" all like him. There is another big boy we like too, only not so much. He sent us a bunch of flowers. They call it a bouquet here. After a few days the flowers faded. We carried them to Feather Bed Lane, and that boy preached a funeral sermon over them. The place is called Feather Bed Lane because it is all rocks and stones.

Now I must tell thee about another boy who is large too. Boys who are about as old as I am, most fifteen thee knows, are no good, they are so silly, they swap jackknives, and trap rabbits, and run after Barnum's caravan as if

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

he was the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Ball throwers, and ball catchers, and ball kickers, that is all they are. But the large boys have some sense. They quote poetry, some of them write it, pretty good it is too, especially when it is about a girl they are in love with. This is a specimen:

“It seems as if Dame Nature sought
To see what she could do
When into this vain world she brought
‘The widow’ Mary U.”

This girl has a “widow’s peak” in her hair and her name is Mary Urania.

They all write in our albums (I wonder if the plural is *alba?*), and make themselves useful carrying shawls and helping us over stone walls, and at times in great emergencies they save life, like this: One evening the teachers were performing experiments in the lecture room, and as my hair is fine and dry and light they made me unbraid it. Then they told

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

me to take hold of the handles of the machine and the electricity made my hair stand up straight all over my head till I looked for all the world like a Maori aborigine. The small boys clapped their hands and laughed. It was so funny the teacher kept turning on more and more electricity until it nearly killed me. I felt just as Mazeppa did when they strapped him to the wild horse of the steppes. I could not drop the handles, I could not speak, but a boy called out to the teacher "Stop! Can't you see you are hurting her?" Well, this same boy is the one I want to tell thee about. He sits at the head of our table and carves the meat. Thee must know the boys' clothes are sent into our part to be mended. I took up a coat one day with which I was quite well acquainted. After sewing up a rip in the sleeve I thought it would be improved by having some lace in the cuffs, so I sewed in two wide pieces ruffled around the wrists.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Lo and behold! the owner wore it down to dinner and carved for us. The lace falling over his hands made them look white and delicate as a lady's. I can tell thee this performance made a sensation. What they did to him I have never known, for he will not tell. At all events he had what Charley calls in his letters written on board his whale ship, "a thorough keel-hauling," for one of the boys overheard a teacher say to him: "I am astonished that thee, a man grown, a speaker in Friends' Meetings, should have allowed thyself to be drawn into such an impropriety by an irresponsible child who has more quips and quirks in one small head in a day than would furnish forth the whole school for a year. If you seniors keep on encouraging her as you are doing, her wild imagination will play her a scurvy trick some day." Goodness gracious but that sounds "pro-fee-tick."

I expect Monsieur felt deep remorse,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

but it has not yet gone deep enough to induce him to restore my thread lace, probably he may not know its value, or that it is an heirloom from great grandmother McGregor, who was not a Quaker. If he does not restore it before I go home I shall offer him a shoestring in exchange if he wants a keepsake, for I should never dare to appear before mother minus that lace.

But to return, when I asked the teacher how she found out *I* sewed in the lace, she made a face at me and replied: "It was not a case requiring the services of a trained detective, anyone who had had the privilege of residing under the same roof with thee for a few weeks could have guessed without the chorus which greeted me in the sitting room as I entered, 'Bathhseba did it.' 'Of course, now let us devise an appropriate punishment, one that will sting and not be forgotten the next minute,' said I. We have settled on one which will per-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

fectly fit the case. Thee can not walk on the avenue for two weeks, nor anywhere else, except in the girls' grove at the back of the house, for exercise. The air is as salubrious there as at Feather Bed Lane."

The Spartan boy with the wolf gnawing at his vitals did not publish his sensations, neither did I, but as soon as she closed the door at her exit I began singing, "Can she make a cherry pie, Billy Boy?" That was a first-class offence to her and to an establishment where the rules forbid singing. I expected she would return forthwith and demand my card, but she did not; her bloodthirstiness was sated for the time being. Not so, my revenge thirstiness. I planned a revolver, one shot for her and one to tease two of my gentlemen friends. My chum and I dressed two girls of our size in our most conspicuous frocks, put my green sunbonnet on the short one, and the blue sunbonnet on

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

the tall one and sent them off down the avenue. Then "the little dog laughed to see the fine sport." The boys waited till they thought they saw us. They walked briskly till they overtook the girls. Then my beau went to the side of the green bonnet, and the other youth to the side of the blue bonnet. Goodness me! How short they stopped when they found who it was, or rather who it was not. However, they behaved like little gentlemen. In a trice they walked on as if nothing had happened, as though those were the very girls they expected and wanted to see. So far so good. Now to pay off Madame. I knew she always watched at the library window to see how the boys and girls paired off. That day she took note of the flowered frock and the green gingham sun bonnet and thought I had gone to walk in defiance of her prohibition, but to make assurance doubly sure that it was not one of Bathsheba's tricks she waited till

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

she saw the four comrades pursue their way as usual down the avenue, then she bounced into the schoolroom to report me to the principal, dashing headlong into the midst of us, as a seagull dashes at a lighthouse lantern, only the impact didn't kill her. Amelia says: "More's the pity." Thee should have seen her face when she caught sight of me sitting at my desk right by the door studying like sixty. Remember how Charley used to go about before the last Presidential election shouting at the top of his voice: "Little Van, little Van is a used up man." That is about the way she looked, only more so. I thought she would surely have a con-niption fit. Two birds, or rather three, at one shot was pretty good luck. Darling wrote a piece about alibis and doppel-gängers. I did not understand it but pretended I did. Thee knows I was always pretty good at make-believe.

I asked him if he enjoyed his walk

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

with the green sunbonnet, and he replied: "Bathsheba, my child, thy vital voltage is too great for this Old Quaker Institution, methinks there would be a considerable topsy-turviness in a world ruled by thee."

I wrote just now about expecting the teacher to ask for my card. I believe I have not told thee about their system of punishments. The proportion of *shall* *nots* is about the same as in the ten commandments, that is nine negations to one affirmation. It is all their own and extremely brilliant, but by being equally brilliant I have been able to avoid the grand catastrophe of losing my card, lo! now these three terms. At the beginning of a term each student receives a card with twenty-four stars on it. At each misdemeanor a star is blotted out, and we have a trifling punishment, a few texts to learn or something of that sort. When the stars are all eclipsed we lose our card. Then all privileges

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

are lost and life is not worth living until the beginning of a new term, then we have a new card and commence sinning all over again. Vacation wipes the slate. We are bankrupts, we get a release from our creditors and business goes on as before. I never lose my card. After the twenty-third star is blotted out I am just as good as a kitten or a lamb, though come to think of it, those quadrupeds are quite frisky at times. Simple but effectual. If thee was here, unblotted would be thy card.

A few of us girls had established an excellent system of mutual help. I hated the examples in arithmetic and algebra. (How can any one care whether or not x plus y equals z ? Talk about solid geometry and the higher mathematics! No Integral Calculus for me. Thank you.), and they hated to write compositions, so they did my examples for me, and I did their compositions for them. This I could easily do, as I had

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

had the forethought to bring from home a goodly supply of my old school essays. Just as everything was in fine running order, a new teacher came upon the scene and was set to the drudgery of correcting papers. He was a very young man not over twenty-one, but keen as a razor! The first week ten themes, tied up together with a blade of quack grass were returned to the schoolroom with these remarks: "The trail of the serpent is over them all. The subject for next week will be Honesty, though it may be found a trifle difficult for a person so unacquainted with the topic to write ten different treatises."

D. A. R. had been at school with this youth in former days and when I explained the scrape I was in, he exclaimed: "O ho! he is the gentleman who used to write dates on his shirt cuffs before examinations. I will shut his mouth." So Darling saved my card for me, but the whole thing was sort of subterraneous

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

in its nature, so about that time the Mutual Aid Society washed its hands in innocency and was disbanded. D. A. R. said Bashy's sums and the girls' compositions were no longer done by Metonymy, whatever that may be. The next week the title of my literary effort was: "The pot shouldn't call the kettle black." This paper never came back.

Thy cousin,

Bathsheba.

10th month 8th, 1841.

Dear Deborah:

If a certain young man speaks the truth (thee will observe I am very suspicious now of all and sundry) his mother's name is Bathsheba. If it is true I am sorry for her. He says they call her Bashy at home, and he wants to call me Bashy so as to make him feel at home. I inquired if he called his mother Bashy. He said: "No, but I hear her called so." I told him he

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

could listen and if he heard me called so then he could feel at home. Young men here are so forth putting I am obliged to snub them occasionally, though if I do it too often they go off and get another girl. There are eighty to choose from, right here in the house. The boys are not the least like Jerry. They are never in dead earnest as Jerry always is. Poor Jerry! How is he in these days? I had almost forgotten him, but he writes he does not forget me and never will. Thee will wonder how he could get a letter delivered here when it is against all rules. I guess thee gave him thy letter to mail; thee had not folded it very well; he pushed back the edge and wrote a few words around the red wafer. What a plague it is to fold a letter. Why does not some great inventor like Benjamin Franklin or Robert Fulton realize it and get up a cover to put them in? It would not be so hard as making a lightning rod or a

steamboat. I could almost do it myself. Just a bag with a flap to turn over is all that is needed. I know there might be something better than the mushy wafers or the troublesome sealing wax. I tried glue. It did pretty well, only I upset the dish and wiped it up with my handkerchief which was as bad as burning my fingers with the sealing wax. Then the horrid sand to dry the ink. I have burned up my sand box,—I hated it so that I threw it into the fire. Now I hold my writing in front of the fire to dry it, but the other day the draft caught the sheet of paper out of my hand and whirled it into the fire, the blackened pieces flew up the chimney and I had to write my abstract all over again. What is wanted is a better way of folding, drying and sealing letters, above all a pen, not a goose quill needing a new nib every ten minutes when my pen has no more point than Jimmy Slocum's wit.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

What was I writing about when I got switched off? Oh! I see, about Jerry. Jerry was the first boy I was ever in love with. We were about six years old when he tumbled into the rainwater hogshead, reaching over to get my sun-bonnet Charley had tossed up into the air. I did not think much about Jerry when he was alive and well, but when it came to drowning I could not live without him. I screamed such awful screams, and shrieked such awful shrieks that father heard me way down in the cornfield and came running and fished him out half drowned, and mother took off his wet clothes and put on my dry ones,—he could not be got into Charley's, though Charley is two years older. He made such a pretty chubby little girl that mother kissed him before she sent him home. He said he would not like to be a sissy and wear petticoats, but he did not mind so long as they were mine. The next day he brought them home,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

all nicely washed and starched and ironed. So thee sees people have masqueraded in my clothes before this. If thee does not know masqueraded look it up so as to keep up with me, for I am learning like a house afire and mother writes after I graduate here I am to go to a Finishing School, but I don't believe there will be much left for me to learn, and as for accomplishments, I am learning here which foot to put first when I mount into the old "Stution" carryall (short for Institution) as well as I could in the carriage, which I hear stands in Madame's court yard for the young ladies to practice on.

To finish about Jerry, he was holding my bonnet string tight in his little fist when they took him out of the water. When Mother was telling the story to a neighbor she said, "Jerry lost his balance." The neighbor's little daughter anxiously inquired if they could not draw off the water and find it again.

Bashy.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

11 mo. 1st, 1841.

My dear Deborah:

To-day I have had a great and overwhelming surprise, and I do not know whether I am most proud of Jerry or ashamed of myself. It seems a letter was brought to the school from the post-office addressed to "The Cock of the School." The teacher smiled and handed it to D. A. R., saying: "This letter must be meant for thee." D. A. R. read it and looking very red and angry gave it back to the teacher, saying: "What can I do?" The teacher after glancing over it said: "Give it to me; I will read it in the girls' schoolroom and make the minxes properly ashamed of themselves."

At the close of the school the teacher requested the girls to remain seated while he read a letter that had been received that day.

After he had read it he laid it on my desk and walked out of the room without saying a word.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Here is a copy of Jerry's letter:

"Dear Sir:

"I address you because I gather from Miss Bathsheba's letters to her cousin that you and the other young gentlemen in your division of the school are guiltless of any participation in the matter I have to write of, which concerns a young girl who has been brought up in the seclusion, I might say the isolation of a Quaker country home, with no companion of her own age except her beloved cousin Deborah and at rare intervals her brother and myself. She has been given an uncommonly sound rudimentary education but has been perhaps too sedulously guarded not only from any knowledge of the sins of the world but also of its frivolities, and particularly everything is unknown to her that differs in any way from Friends' principles or prejudices. She has thus been an easy victim to the young ladies who have fooled her to the top of their bent. Never having been deceived by anyone she received as gospel truth their tales of the mythical saints Valentine and Nicholas and I know not how many more. I trust you to take her part and prevent these unseemly jests in future as I should myself were I there. If the kind

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

hearts of the young ladies are appealed to I feel sure that will be all that is needed.

"Yours truly,

"Jerry."

The girls were all crying, and three or four who had fooled me came and kissed me and begged my pardon. I shall write to Jerry to-night, rules or no rules. I could find it in my heart to like him better than the lily-handed wearer of the lace ruffles if he was not so countrified and would not wear cow-hide boots direct from the stable and clothes that look as if they had been cut out with a jig saw and made for Benjamin Franklin by his faithful Deborah, two suits a year. To-night my favorite teacher said to me: "I hope thee prizes at his proper worth thy *preux chevalier*, I mean to say in English thy valiant young knight."

I think she will see that my letter to Jerry goes to the office. Ever thine,

Bathsheba.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

10th mo. 5th, 1842.

Dear Cousin Deborah:

To-day I have covered myself with glory and disgrace, first one then t'other. The teacher asked the class in English Literature if any of us knew what was meant in the verses composed about Queen Victoria's coronation four years ago, when the poet wrote:

"Then the trumpets braying
And the organ playing,
And sweet trombones
With their silver tones,
But Lord Rolle was rolling
'Twas mighty consoling
To think his Lordship did not break his bones."

Nobody knew. Finally I raised my hand and the teacher spoke rather cross: "Bathsheba will now tell us all she knows and a little more." Was not that a mean speech to make at a public examination? but she wanted to shine by telling the story herself. If I had

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

had any marrow in my bones her Gorgon gaze would certainly have frozen it. I was provoked, and I always do best when I am angry, so I began with what the girls call "a burst of Bathsheba's eloquence," and described how the princes, dukes, earls, and marquises in their splendid decorations knelt before the girl queen and professed their allegiance, and how she blushed when her uncle kneeled down humbly before her, and when Lord Rolle's turn came he was a feeble old man and it was not easy for him to kneel and he slipped and fell down the steps of the throne and the lovely young queen sprang up to assist him and all the nobility of England gathered in Westminster Abbey applauded her kind impulse; and how mean I thought it was for a poet to ridicule poor old Lord Rolle's rolling. "But," I added, "He is not the only one who says mean things." It would not answer for the teacher to take this

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

to herself and reprove me for it, but she had her revenge. When the arithmetic class came in next hour she gave me a sum on the blackboard well calculated to take the wind out of my sails. Most teachers ardently desire success for their pupils, but she could get credit enough from the rest of the class whose names were all marked in her copy of the arithmetic against the examples they could do best and which by frequent repetition they had at their finger's ends. I ought to have declined the contest, but I was foolish enough to pick up the gauntlet she had thrown down. I know no more about figures than the man in the moon, however, I tried to put up as big a bluff as Molière's doctor who when told he was listening to the patient's heart on the *wrong* side, that is the *right*, replied: "*Nous avons changé tout cela.*" I made a horrible mess of it, for if figures will not lie they certainly will not be cajoled and smoothed

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

over. It was a dead failure. As if that was not enough the spiteful teacher said: "Sylvia will now bring this problem to a successful conclusion." A young visitor in a far corner of the room emitted a sound very like a hiss. He was used to what boys call fair-play and did not relish this sort of thing. I hope she is happy to-night. I know I am, for a good-natured lady on the committee said to me after school: "Never mind, little girl, a mathematical mind is of a lower order than a literary one. Anyway thee will make just as good a wife and mother as if thee could work out every problem in Colburn's and Daboll's arithmetics."

The girls came around me to-night and wanted to give me a supper in Number Four. They declared they were proud of me, and were firm in the belief that mathematics are of no use except to architects and engineers.

Speaking of suppers, on my last birth-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

day, the first of eighth month, I had a box of cake, pies, jellies and candy from home. I thought it would be an excellent idea to give the girls a midnight supper on my bed. Of course we might have had it in the dining room at any time before nine o'clock, but that would be altogether too commonplace; no fun at all.

Well, six of us were sitting on my bed in our wrappers, our feet tucked under the bedclothes and the box for a table in the center of the circle. It had a candle and a pitcher of water on it. The water was smuggled up from the basement by Bridget who is devoted to me since we settled the Catholic question between us so amicably. She is really a pretty girl now, her indoor life has wiped off her freckles, leaving her skin as white as snow; her hair has darkened by frequent applications of cold tea and other beautifiers, her eyes of Irish gray were always pretty

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

with their long upcurling lashes, her figure has filled out from a course of our healthy diet of bread and molasses and I am certain her brothers and sisters and cousins will not recognize her on their arrival. She is also making progress in the Yankee dialect, which is rather a pity as her brogue is fascinating; however, she is delighted to be my understudy. Let us dismiss Bridget to the lower regions with her plate of goodies.

Just as we were having the best possible time, giggling in whispers, we heard some one coming. The girls jumped up and upset the pitcher of water all over me, I blew out the candle and there I sat like Marius amid the ruins of Carthage, when the door opened and a teacher stood on the threshold with a lighted candle in her hand. Fortunately for us she was young and not very long ago had partaken of midnight suppers herself. She tried not

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

to laugh, but when she took in the smoking candle, the overturned water pitcher, my woe-begone expression in my "hydropathic wet pack," saw here a bare heel and there the skirt of a yellow flannel wrapper protruding from under the bed, she gave up the struggle, said: "Ladies, I am sorry to have disturbed you," walked into the room, closed the door, helped herself to a piece of cake, put her candle on the box, seated herself in a dry spot near the bedpost and smacking her lips *à la* Uncle Silas, enunciated in the true Silasian manner: "Girls, this is pure folly, if folly can ever be called pure," then laughed till she could laugh no more. I filled a plate with a huge piece of black cake, half a mince pie, and about a pound of candy, and presented it to her with my gravest bow. The girls emerged from their retirement and while the teacher went to her room for a pitcher of fresh water, the feather bed, a legal

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

heir of Feather Bed Lane, was reversed, and that supper finished with a zip and a bang. Great is zipology.

The teacher was married at the end of the term, and we girls furnished the bride cake. The ring was in my piece. For once in a way the sign is likely to come true, for why keep a *preux chevalier* waiting out in the cold when everybody is willing? Let me get that diploma for daddy that he wants from the finishing school, then we will see what can be done for Jerry. May my wedding be half as jolly as my *cold* collation in the Nursery Chamber!

Bathsheba.

11th month, 27th, 1843.

My dear Cousin:

My heart is nearly broken at the thought of leaving this dear school where I have passed the four happiest years of my life, but the fiat has gone forth. I have graduated and must leave this

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

elysium to make room for new comers. I am to spend a year at home with mother to learn housekeeping, then I am to go to the dreaded Finishing School, where I know it is impossible I should enjoy myself as I have done here. Our class has just repeated in concert the farewell poem composed by one of our number, and the words are still ringing in my ears.

“Yet the clasped hand and lowly breathed farewell

And we shall turn with saddened hearts away
No more together in these halls to dwell.”

I feel too sad, I cannot write any more; so good bye until we meet again in our old haunts, where we shall find that all our childish aims, hopes and opinions are, as Mamselle expresses it, “bouleversed.”

Shall we ever again use the old tree post-office? I am afraid we have grown too sophisticated to write letters where

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

we may more easily use tongue than pen, but those were good old times too.

Bathsheba.

November 18th, 1844.

My dear Deborah:

Behold me at the much dreaded Finishing School. It is not really so objectionable as Sing Sing though I am already up against one prison rule. I went out for a walk after school and coming to a street where things seemed a trifle more alive I turned into it. I read the sign "Chestnut Street." On my return in giving a description of my walk, I remarked that Chestnut Street did not seem quite so funereal as the other streets where it was so still one could have heard a pin drop on the pavement, and the white board window shutters are all bowed with black ribbon as if there were a death in every house. "Have you been walking on

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Chestnut Street? Did you not know it is forbidden to walk there?" "No, I did not know it. What is the matter with the street? Are the inhabitants stricken with the plague or the small-pox?" My flippancy was rebuked, and that is my first and last promenade on their fashionable avenue. I do not know why this seems like a prison rule. The asylum wall and Feather Bed Lane never struck me as restrictive, yet the whole distance we could walk was less than half a mile, while here only one street in a great city is forbidden. There it was *straight* down that *crooked* lane, *round* that *square* and so home again, but it was enough, there was no speed limit.

Later. Here is another grievance. I said in my careless way of talking to our little black-eyed instructress with the bobbing curls fastened with a side comb on each side of her temples: "Will thee learn me that stitch?" She drew

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

herself up and said: "I teach, thou learns." As if I did not know the distinction between those verbs before I was five years old. I guess the plain truth of the matter is I am homesick, no, not homesick but school sick. I want to see the girls and boys, especially the latter. I wonder if D. A. R. ling has teetotally forgotten me, if W. C. H. still cares that I refused to correspond with him, if Lace Cuffs cherishes the shoestring for which he made a forced exchange of two bits of old lace. He wanted a lock of electrified hair, but he didn't get it. However, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow expresses it in his new poem "The Psalm of Life," "Let the dead past bury its dead." Speaking of Longfellow, there is to be a discussion at Girard College about his fame. Will he be remembered a century hence? Which side does thee take? I asked that question of a Southern pupil from New Orleans, and she said: "I don't

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

know anything about him. Isn't he one of those low down Yankees who try to get our servants away from us?" I think Shakespeare will outlast Longfellow by a good many years. I do wish I could see Wallack play Shakespeare. As well wish for the moon.

I have signalized my arrival here by breaking off a piece of a tooth. The dentist tried to console me by saying: "It is very fashionable not to wear the bicuspids." I suppose when I cut my wisdom teeth and lose them directly as most people do, he will say: "It is very fashionable not to wear the molars." Fashionable or not, I wish I had my tooth again. Uncle Jim says a vacancy in a bookshelf is as unsightly as a missing tooth from a lady's mouth. Perhaps it is fear of that blemish which prevents him from ever taking out a book to read or lend. I don't suppose he would loan one under any circumstances, not even to those "Indigent

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Females" who, he is always telling his nephews and nieces, are to inherit his property. On one of these occasions I said: "Uncle Jim, you take great pains not to raise false hopes in our breasts to make us wish you dead, but I will tell you one thing, I would rather have you than all your millions; so when I am around you can give those 'Indigent Females' a rest. You work them over time."

Uncle Jim is not a Quaker and he never uses "the plain language," consequently I do not use it in speaking to him, neither does father, but mother would say: "I hope thee is pretty well," to a king if she ever met one and not be the least abashed or "put by" as she would express it, just holding fast to her religious convictions. So would I, if I had them, but I fail to see any religion in the personal pronoun. I am half Jew, half Ashdod in my speech.

Uncle Jim has sent me a very peculiar

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

present, he remarks in his letter that there has recently been discovered a way of melting the gum, which on incision, will flow from the rubber tree in South America and moulding it around a last so as to make an overshoe impervious to water. It is his desire to give me something to keep me out of the mud, and I should say he has done it. The shoes are solid rubber, nearly an inch thick, weighing a pound apiece, consequently they are rather cumbersome to carry about, but being without seams they *cannot* leak. I think I will bequeath my pair to his "Indigent Females." They can wear them turn and turn about. Let one hobble half way around the yard, when she comes in *rub-her* down and let her rest, while the next one takes a stroll. They remind me of mother's soft soap trough which being made of a dug out tree log is pretty unwieldy but cannot leak because it has no seams. Here they call the new

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

overshoes gums, and when I came in to-day Miss Mary admonished me to *wipe my gums on the mat.*

As this is exclusively a Young Ladies' Seminary no young men are allowed on the reservation, so there does not appear to be much opportunity for flirting, which is certainly a drawback. The nearest approach to it is at the riding school where *faute de mieux* the riding master is on his promotion. They say his style of tossing his pupils into the saddle is "unique." One lady reports feeling as if she were thistle-down floating through the air. Another has parodied "France, I adore thee." Her version is:

Seth, I adore thee,
Fondly I love thee,
Proudly before me
Thy red whiskers blaze.

I believe they say he has a wife and nine children at home and will never see sixty-five again, but I cannot think

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

it is as bad as that, I should discount four of the children and fifteen of the years. Some day I shall ask him how the chickabiddies are. Amelia says he has the same number of children as John Rogers in the New England Primer. Has it ever been decided whether there were nine or ten in that family?

Yesterday the girls in the third story looked out of the window and saw Joe Marot passing caught in a shower. In the goodness of their hearts they threw him down an umbrella. Miss Mary saw the missile fly past the parlor window, and as she cannot discover who threw it nor from which room it was thrown, she has bowed the shutters of *all* the front windows, so we are as much in the dark as she is.

Not many pupils are here yet. They will not leave home until after Thanksgiving. Mother said: "That is of no importance. All days should be days of thanksgiving, not one more than

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

another, certainly not one appointed by a loco foco governor." I wonder are the new loco foco matches named for the party or the party for the matches? I also wonder why all Friends are Whigs. They are great politicians. The children hurrah for Henry Clay unrebuked. All this Summer and Fall there have been mass meetings and processions headed by a hay-cart full of children waving the stars and stripes and shouting:

"O yes, Polk and Dallas
We'll send to the gallus,"

all much to the alarm of the poor raccoon chained to the ladder at the front end of the cart. I suppose the raccoon was emblematical of something, though I am sure I don't know of what. One of the girls says the Whigs are called coons because they are generally up a tree. How I did love Henry Clay. I cried myself to sleep the night it became certain beyond a doubt that

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

“the Great Pacificator” was defeated. Father said: “I am up Salt River and the country has gone to the dogs,” and in my little bed I moaned: “*My* tears are salter than any *river*, they are as salt as the Dead *Sea*.” That is only two weeks ago, and to continue my geographical comparisons, my tears for *Clay* are as dry as the *sands* of the Desert of Sahara, and the country is welcome to go to the dogs. Nothing matters now but Bathsheba and her own paltry concerns. Let who will be President.

To change the subject. When the Quakers declare they are “a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” the first part of the statement is undeniably true. I am sloughing those peculiarities as fast as possible. I say *you* all the time now, and it comes almost as natural as thee, though I do not think I shall ever say it to thee; between us it would sound unnatural and cold. The days of

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

the week and the months of the year give more trouble. I still count my fingers to make sure that October is Tenth Month, for from its derivation it ought to be the eighth. I have one month to depend on with certainty, for I can always think of Jerry chanting: "What so rare as a day in June! O excuse me, mother, What so rare as a day in Sixth Month!"

The German *Du* is more manageable than the English *thou*, it is easier to say "Du sinnst" than "thou meditatest," though the Germans spoil it by using it only in their families and to children, and servants or *inferiors* generally. When Jerry was a little chap he whistled to his dog and called "Kommen Sie hier." He had to undergo a good deal of chaffing about his politeness to a dog.

It is all in the point of view. Here are two opposing anecdotes to illustrate that statement. A Quaker pupil in this school has mortally offended the German

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

professor by saying *thee* to him. He shouted, "I am not your servant," and things were quite lively until I was able to explain that it was a part of her religion. He growled, "Verdammt religion to insult a gentleman." Now for the reverse of the shield.

Once in a terrific thunderstorm at home while the family cringed before the forked lightning and hearkened in awed silence to the reverberating thunder, Jerry came and sat by me, inquiring "Do you feel very much frightened?" Cousin Sophronia solemnly put the question, "Jeremiah, will not *thee* feel very much frightened if *thee* is suddenly called to appear before thy Maker and Judge with that word *you* on thy lips?"

When the storm was over and the sun came out, out came Cousin Sophronia also, followed by Jerry saying: "Well, cousin, the *ewe* did not butt the stray lamb into the pit that time. The innocent lamb has come off gamboling."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I leave thee to imagine the answer he received.

Thine as ever,

Sheba.

(That is my name here, or Queen of Sheba.)

P. S. One of the girls has a beau, an old bachelor, a very learned man. Last evening I knew he was in the parlor, so paused before entering the room fearing to interrupt a proposal of marriage. The door was ajar and hearing the word "newspaporial" roundly pronounced, I concluded it was safe to enter, as I had never had any experience of such a word as that, either in love making in real life or in the tender scenes of a novel. Still I think he means business in his ponderous fashion, though I believe "Ye ladye is not in ye mood" as George Washington wrote of pretty Mary Philipse after her refusal of his matter of fact offer. G. W. was a great man

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

but he had his limitations, he could not please a pretty girl, neither can our lexicographer or I am mistaken in my diagnosis.

B.

October first, 1845.

Dear Deborah:

I am going to write thee a scrappy letter of items and jottings as if I were a reporter with an assignment.

When the doctor came yesterday to vaccinate the not recently revaccinated inmates of our school, he left his horse to nibble the hitching post while I stroked his velvety nose. (The English language badly needs an extra pronoun to enable me to show clearly that it was not the doctor's velvety nose I stroked.) No, indeedy!

I had the sweet satisfaction of feeding sugar plums to Bucephalus and advising him to be vaccinated on his hind leg, so that in case he ever became a per-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

forming horse in a circus and walked upright, the scar would not show on his forearm, if he wore short sleeves.

It has just occurred to me that vaccine matter being the product of a sick cow may not agree with a healthy horse. He may even die of lock jaw in consequence of it, but I suppose that would not be so bad as having his classic velvety nose scarred with small pox. Then suppose they made a law he must not be a high school horse, must not go to school at all, unless he could flash up a scar. I told the old war horse if he had good horse sense he would "kick" at that,—not even allowed to learn "whoa!" or "git-ep" or "gaylang!"

Thinking of home last night, I seemed to see father as I have often seen him, with his "coat tails subducted on high," over either arm, standing with the posterior development of his person turned *not* towards a fire of blazing logs, but towards the pitcherful of apple blossoms

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

on the fireless hearth of the fireless fireplace, and I could almost hear mother say reprovingly: "Bashy, don't laugh at father when he is absent minded, perhaps he is cogitating how best to devise his property so as to leave thee under my guardianship till thee is twenty-five or thirty. Thee will need it unless thee marries Jerry."

And I reply pettishly: "I am not going to marry Jerry. There is nothing romantic in marrying a man I have known from our cradles. Besides he is just a 'cow-boy.' He reminds me too strongly of these lines: 'O most bucolical juvenal, under whose charge are placed the milky mothers of the herd.'"

Here is a singular tale about one of our friends, but I can vouch for its truth.

A young girl at Mount Holyoke Seminary was horribly homesick. For her encouragement her aunt sent her a telegraphic message: "See Deuteronomy

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

xxxi : 6." When it reached its destination the three x's had dropped out and it read: "See Deuteronomy 1 : 6." Instead of "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them," the text was: "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount, turn you and take your journey." Small wonder that the next train bore the distressed damsel to the bosom of her unexpectant family.

Bashy.

P. S. A man devoted to euchre has died. In his funeral notice in to-day's paper there occurs an unfortunate error in type-setting "Kindly omit bowers," which would have been quite contrary to the wishes of deceased.

December 10th, 1845.

My dear Deborah:

Thee says I can never again do anything that will surprise thee but that

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

is a misapprehension on thy part, the unexpected has happened.

Prepare to be more astonished than thee ever was in all the days of thy life. I shall never graduate at this Pinnacle of Learning. Father will never see my diploma, which has been his sole dependence since Charley cut the Quaker School at Haverford and ran away to sea. 'Cause why, they do not graduate married women at this Institution and I was married a few minutes ago. To be absolutely and precisely correct one hundred and twenty minutes by the clock. It happened on this wise. Jerry had enlisted for the Mexican War, and came to bid me good-bye before going to the front to join his regiment under General Zachary Taylor, Commander of the United States Army. He has grown like a weed since I saw him last, measures six feet, two inches without his cowhide boots. The bucolic lover has vanished. My! but he was scrumptious. There he

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

was—beaming, bearded beauteous, and moreover

“He was drest
In his Sunday best.”

(besides being manicured). I was “filled with wonder, awe and praise.” I looked at him with all the humility of the Bible Esther before her king. I tell thee, Deborah, a uniform is the proper caper, the Friends' Society to the contrary notwithstanding. I want Jerry to put on all the frills. As Bridget would say he looked “illigent intirely.” I had always suspected that I loved Jerry and no one else. Now I was sure of it with the intuition of the homing pigeon. One might think it was clothes did the trick but it wasn't. It was to see him in his true character of a gentleman.

D. A. R. ling was swept away in the vortex of Time. Lace Cuffs was wiped out of existence like “the wolftail cloud

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

that streaks the West at sunset, and is gone forever." Jerry was first and the rest nowhere, but Jerry was going to Mexico to be killed. At the thought I wept so bitterly that Jerry said the only way to comfort me was to marry me immediately. He had made up his mind to sacrifice himself on the altar of Duty, and would begin now. So if nothing else would pacify me we would step out and find a minister and get it over with and we did, and were engaged and married within half an hour. But it's colossal, that idea!

We were married by an eminent divine, by the bride roses,—perennial on the minister's mantel shelf, where the irrepressible bridegroom deposited his first month's pay as a warrior, remarking meanwhile, that if his bargain proved a good one, he would come back at the end of the war and *double* it in Spanish *doubloons*. He deposited the honorarium with the air of a knight

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

of the olden time hanging his shield on a shrine at the point of his lance, and as we came out of the house whispered to me: "I feel like one of the what's his names carrying off a Sabine woman. I am no longer a lone, lorn holluschickie."

I should not have presented such a striking resemblance to Barkis, only I knew Jerry was so big he would be an easy mark for those sharpshooters and when he was wounded and in the hospital they would not half take care of him, and I should be almost wild if father would not let me go to him, but if I was his wife no one could hinder me. Oh what will father and mother say? Deborah, dear Deborah, I want thee to tell them, I cannot do it.

The girls are wild with excitement. They call him their *beau-ideal* and *ideal-beau*. The subject of this remark overheard it as he entered the schoolroom and carried it on by saying: "Yes, and we will make *life-ideal* for each

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

other and lead an *ideal-life* such as this old earth has never before seen, if Bashy doesn't have too many tantrums over her millinery and if *I deal*. And girls, accept my parting blessing while I deprive you of your brightest ornament, and whatever you do, invite only *Cupid* to your weddings, never *Cupidity*."

We have had a bad quarter of an hour with the principal after her long and minute examination of the hard and fast marriage certificate. I had obligingly offered her a binocular oxy-hydrogen microscope, a piece of impudence she would have resented yesterday, but she felt I had passed beyond her jurisdiction. Finally I said: "We are married, nothing can alter that, you can not unmarry us. It is a Life Sentence of Matrimony. The deed is done and cannot be undone, short of the divorce court, besides Friends do not allow divorces among their members." At last she succumbed before Jerry's

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

blandishments, and decided to let me go with him, saying he had a trustworthy carriage, whereupon he made her a low bow and disappeared, remarking he would go and fetch it. "Fetch what?" inquired the bewildered woman. I guess she will find out when he comes back.

Madame has her advance payment for the year's board and tuition which no doubt considerably alleviates and ameliorates her grief at parting with me.

Jerry has come back with his trustworthy carriage and I must not keep my husband!!! waiting.

So good-bye from *Sheba*,
Queen now and forever.

P. S. The happy bridegroom has just rushed into my room walking on air and kissed me. It is the first time I was ever kissed by a moustache and I thought it was rather nice. I am the happiest thing in the whole world and Jerry is the grandest fellow ever. *B.*

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

December 20th, 1845.

Dear, dearest Deborah:

So father and mother did not die of shock, and there they are, still alive. It was cute of thee to ask them whom they would prefer that I should marry if they had the ordering of it, and when both answered in the same breath: "Jerry, but she will never do it," and thee said: "She *has* done it," it was beautiful. They were overpowered but soon reconciled, which might not have been the case if the news had been communicated by a blunderer. Of course I would never have acted as I did, if I had not known it was the dearest wish of both their hearts and that Jerry's parents regard me as something supernaturally superfine. I knew mother would want me to be married over again in meeting but would see its impracticability because Jerry is "under dealings" for going to the war, and both of us for "a disorderly marriage, a marriage ac-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

complished by a hireling priest." What a time the Monthly Meeting will have disowning us. Poor mother, it will make her down sick. The men will have to "concur" about me, and the women will have to "concur" about Jerry. Perhaps they will raise the shutters and hold a joint business session as they do sometimes. I'll bet they'll not get either of us to say we are sorry. Let the meeting disown us. What is a birth-right membership worth anyway?

Think what we should have had to go through if we had stayed at home and been married "according to the good order established among us."

First go to Monthly Meeting, sit through the meeting of worship, when the shutters are lowered between the two sides of the house for a business meeting, walk into the men's part and inform them that we contemplate marriage with each other. Then give the

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

same notice to the women. The men appoint two men and the women appoint two women to see if we are clear of other marriage engagements and report next month. If the report is satisfactory the meeting asks for written consent of parents, which is sent the following month. After this the Monthly Meeting appoints a day for the marriage also a committee to attend the meeting and the dinner to see that all is done in an orderly manner. On the day appointed for the marriage we go to the meeting house, sit on the facing seat for an hour, closely watched by a crowd of curious spectators, are preached over, repeat the marriage ceremony ourselves, sign the certificate, hear it read, see it signed by any number of witnesses who may choose to immortalize their names on our parchment, home to dinner and finally depart. See how a few tears simplified matters. All this publicity was needed in the time of George

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Fox, for Quaker marriages were then illegal. Why not drop it now? With all the love that can be spared from Jerry.

Thy grateful

Bashy.

January 5th, 1846.

Dear Deborah:

Jerry's regiment is in camp for a month yet, learning to be soldiers. The other day the new Major was drilling them. When they came to a stone wall he did not know the proper order to give them, so he said in trumpet tones, "Forward! March! overcome all obstacles with alacrity!"

They have one man who has been a soldier in Europe and sees their deficiencies so plainly that he drills them in season and out of season, gets them up in the middle of the night to show them what to do in case of a surprise. A private wished this officer in a place

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

unmentionable to ears polite, but another soldier exclaimed: "For Pity's sake don't wish him there, for if he gets hold of us where we can't desert he will keep right on having battalion drill three times a day till the place freezes over. Then he will have the drill on the ice."

Jerry and I are keeping house close by the camp. The men laugh at me, but I don't care. I would like to put on Jerry's second best uniform and go to war with him. It would be but a fair exchange after his wearing my frock, only since that time he has grown up big and I have grown up little, and the clothes would not be so good a fit.

It is great sport to keep house. To be sure I do not know much about it, but I am learning. At first I made quite a number of mistakes. One day I boiled a ham and to be economical made a vegetable soup of the water it was boiled in. It was not good, but

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Jerry was far away above food and at that stage of the game would have eaten it and praised it, if it had killed him, but I would not permit it. If he was determined to die I wanted it to be in the last ditch, face to the enemy. My cooking is simple and slightly slapdash but considering it was made of skim milk, my ice cream was not so bad, come Christmas. I know people who manage to retain their self respect on worse. I did not miss the freezer. It was only necessary to bury a tin dinner pail in a snow bank a few hours. Jerry sends thee a riddle. "Why is this terrestrial ball like Bashy's popovers?" Because it is round like an orange and flattened at the pole.

One day I ordered a halibut for dinner, but the market man remarked as the family was small perhaps two pounds would be enough. The man did not even smile, but Jerry shrieked and fell over laughing: "A halibut?"

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Why, you could not get it into this room."

Bashy.

P. S. I am glad that if Jerry must go to war he doesn't have to wear my muff on his head. It would be awful hot in that hot climate, and very likely cause a sunstroke.

HOSPITAL BEFORE BUENA VISTA,
March 25th, 1847.

My dear Cousin:

Before Jerry left me I told him we had been engaged such a little while, not more than twenty minutes, and had never had time to write any love letters that I felt as if I had been defrauded of a most precious episode in my life, and I proposed that we should pretend that we were lovers, not married at all, and write some flaming love letters to each other while he was in Mexico. He agreed, as he would if I had asked him

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

to step up and fetch me the moon. Once in awhile he would forget and begin: "My dear wife," or "I think I would give *some* of my old boots in the back entry closet to see you," but I kept it up all right, no matrimony in mine, nor any prospect of any for a long time to come. Sometimes Jerry appeared to be actually inspired, and wrote love verses worthy of Lord Byron or Bobbie Burns but I never felt downright sure and certain they were not copied from some book of elegant extracts, for "you can't most always sometimes tell." It is sad, but there be moments when Jerry is unreliable. This is in his last letter before the battle in which he came so near to losing his life.

Lady, I ask no greater joy
Than what thy glance bestows
It warmed my heart while yet a boy
Unchilled the passion glows.

I have no use for quotation marks.

Jerry.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

The boy part is all right and seems like internal evidence, but there was Chatterton, loads of internal evidence, but a fraud after all. However, give Jerry the benefit of the doubt. It is possible he is a poet incarnate.

After the battle of Buena Vista I received a telegraphic despatch that Jerry was wounded. I let no grass grow under my feet, but went to him through all the ungodly names and places as speedily as I could get there in cars and steam-boats and stages and lumber wagons and ox-carts, on horseback, on mule-back, and on foot. This I did in wifely disobedience to my husband's commands, without taking a second, or a second's thought. When I at last reached the hospital I found the nurses had been reading my letters to Jerry, and they would not let me see him because they said I was a fraud and not married to him at all. I went straight to General Taylor, but I could not gain admission.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I laid aside Friends' principles altogether, said I carried despatches from President Polk, calmly walked in behind the messenger, told the general the whole story, and showed him our marriage certificate. The old trump gave me a pass, but while he was writing it I heard him mutter to himself: "What fools these mortals be. That Puck of Shakespeare's was certainly right."

Thee should have seen me triumphantly flourishing my pass in the faces of those nurses and taking possession of my husband. However we were good friends afterwards, for they had taken excellent care of Jerry, and he was on the high road to recovery.

As the war is supposed to be nearly ended he will be honorably discharged and go home with me. He has been promoted for bravery, and is now a First Lieutenant; he is pleased, though *I* should have liked Colonel or General better. I am sure he deserves the best

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

there is. A Lieutenant is below a General, but a General is below a Lieutenant-General. How do they account for that discrepancy? Answer me that, ye wise acres.

I wanted to tell thee when to expect us, so just here I stopped writing and asked Jerry how soon he thought we could start for home. He answered laconically, "Next March." Did that mean next Third Month, or next time the army is in motion, or when he has his order to march, or when the late unpleasantness is at an end, or what did it mean? I said: "Please do not be so ambiguous. I can not understand cryptic utterances."

"Neither can I. I can understand I *am big*, but *you us* is as poor grammar as the infant in Punch used when she said: 'Her aint a callin' of we, us don't belong to she?'" I suppose this is my husband's peculiar manner of saying he does not know, therefore don't look for us till you see us.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Jerry is glorious over the success of the United States, but I believe father is right in saying it is an unjust war. Mother writes he reads the Biglow Papers morning, noon and night and enjoys them greatly. He has engrossed a number of the sentences and mounted them on cardboard, which he desired to hang up in the keeping room, but she told him she had always borne in mind George Fox's testimony in favor of "clean walls" and that no pictures were to hang there with her good will, not even their own portraits which Bashy had insisted should be painted. So he has hung it on the back of the workshop door.

Mother does not believe the things Mr. Biglow prints against the war, for she says Jerry is in it and unless it was all right he would not have gone. She may hold fast to George Fox's bare walls but she has lost sight of his peace principles since her beloved son-in-law is a soldier. I wish I was as firm in my

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

belief as she is, that he can do no wrong, but the officers have had so many brilliant victories to celebrate that they are ready to stand by their country when they can stand by nothing else. The orderly in this hospital says he carries them "*sober*" water every morning before breakfast unless they are more than usually sober over night. I asked Jerry if he ever needed to drink any of it. As the cross examination was likely to be searching he hastened to reply: "Certainly not. Whatever put that in your silly little head? Did not your mother cause me to sign temperance pledges by the dozen before I was knee high to a grasshopper, and if that is not a perfect protection against the use of soda water what is? When the doctor told the nurse to take away all intoxicating liquor from me I remarked that she could not take away something I had never had." I am afraid mother's son-in-law is not so truthful as G. W. and

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

myself, for the orderly winked and went away laughing. An appropriate song for their singing would be "coming through the *rye*."

Those soldiers remind me of Martin Luther's phrase, "Wine, women and song." There! I hope the Devil will not appear to me *in propria persona* as he did to Luther after he had written these words for I want all my ink to write letters to thee and have none to waste on his sable majesty, moreover I do not want to put an indelible stain on this wall like the one which is still visible at the Wartburg to prove the truth of this story.

Many of the wounded in our hospital are carved and scarred by bayonets and bullets, but being young and strong and having the best of care they are mostly recovering and will soon go home to adoring mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts, but none of them all can rejoice more than I do in the recovery of the best beloved.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

I shall never forget those days of terrible anxiety when I knew not whether I should find him alive, or dead and buried in an unknown grave. All the discomforts and dangers of the journey, and they were very great, seemed as nothing, if I could only fly to him. I often thought of the old Mother Shipton prophecy of "the time when carriages without horses would go" and wished that time had already come. I wonder what the carriages will be called, perhaps "High Flyers" or "Lofty Tumblers" or "Self Movers," who knows?

Here are the sentences of Father's Confession of Faith relegated from the house to the workshop, which he has copied for me.

"An' every feller felt ez tho' all Mexico was hisn."

"If once we get to Mexico we fairly may presume we all day an' night shall revel in the Halls of Montezumy."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

"Our Nation's bigger'n their'n, so its rights
are bigger."

"I don't believe in princerples
But, O, I du in interest."

"We kind o' thought Christ went agin war an'
pillage."

"This goin' ware glory waits ye haint one
agreeable featur."

"Ninepunce a day fer killin' comes kind 'o low
for murder."

"They just want this Californy
So's to lug new Slave States in."

"O, wouldn't I be off quick time, ef t'wornt
thet I was sartin They'd let the daylight into me
to pay me for desartin'."

"Put in stiff, you fifer feller,
Let folks see how spry ye be,—
Guess you'll toot till ye are yellor
Fore you git a hold o' me!"

"Tell 'em that on the Slavery question
I'm RIGHT, altho to speak I'm lawth:
This gives you a safe pint to rest on,
An' leaves me frontin' South by North."

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

“An’ if I’ve one pecooler featur,
It is a nose that won’t be led.”

“I du believe in *any* plan
O’ levyin’ the taxes,
Ez long ez, like a lumber man,
I git just what I axes.”

Jerry insists he agrees with Commodore Decatur in his famous toast: “My country! May it be always right! but my country! right or wrong!” This came pretty near being our first quarrel, but I remembered mother told me to beware of the first quarrel and I stopped in time.

Jerry says I ought not to find fault with his toast, for it is just what he drinks silently every day, only he substitutes wife for country. Of course when Jerry talks that way it’s no use expecting him to talk any other way.

Thine as ever,
Bathsheba.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

June 10th, 1847.

My dear Cousin:

Here we are at home again, but what is home without a Deborah? How shocking for thee and aunt to have taken wings and flown away to a distant city during our absence. I could bear it better if thee had taken unto thyself a Jerry of thy own, and flown away on the wings of love, but just to teach a parcel of little savages their abc's! It is not to be borne. Thee says it has become necessary for thee to teach school, prithee, sweet coz, might not a school have been found nearer home? I am like the woman in the mountains of New Hampshire who asked the Boston merchant how he could bear to live so far away. What are the advantages of city life in comparison to leaving this dearest spot on earth? I wish we were rich and could take thee and aunt right into our home, but I know thy independent spirit, thee would

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

not come if we were worth billions. This is our first disagreement and I must try to be resigned, for like my marriage it is an accomplished fact, not to be gainsaid.

Does thee remember the tale of Aunt Jerusha and her brass warming pan in the Revolutionary War? Well, to-day I have visited her old tumble down house and these eyes have beheld that relic of long past days, hanging against the wall behind the heavy tent curtains on the high post bedstead where she used to sleep half smothered in a bed of live geese feathers all plucked by her own hands from the squawking poultry. She lived well into this century and her granddaughter has often heard her tell the tale of her flight through the woods when she carried this brass warming pan, her most precious possession, in her arms and in her quick passage among the trees it gave forth so many musical sounds that her companions deserted her

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

fearing it would guide the British soldiers on their trail.

Yes, here we are at home again. The honey or treacle moon still shines bright, after many moons have waxed and waned but I confess we do have differences of opinion. "Bashy," said Jerry, "I heard a capital story to-day. I'll tell it to you for it is true every time. A man and his wife were disputing about a piece of cloth. 'It is linen,' said he. 'It is cotton,' said she. A friend who overheard the argument inquired the next day how they settled it. 'Oh!' replied he: 'We compromised, compromised on cotton.'"

"Nonsense," said I, "that is a regular man's story. You and I compromise on linen just as often as we do on cotton, and that is the way it ought to be. I think this is a very good idea, first cotton, then linen, then cotton, then linen. Let's try it."

For a long time it worked to a charm.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Whenever opinions differed, linen or cotton had it, turn and turn about.

One morning at the breakfast table Jerry said: "Where shall we go this summer for my vacation?"

"Let's go to Newport," said I.

"Oh no, I can't afford that. Let's go down to my grandfather's place at Apponegansett."

"Well," said I, "don't decide about it now. There is time enough. We'll talk it over this evening."

At dinner I exclaimed: "Jerry, you must send up the plumber this afternoon to look after that kitchen sink."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. There is nothing on earth the matter with the sink. You pour peppermint down the pipes to see if there is a leak, and when the smell of the peppermint goes all over the house, as of course it does, you sniff around with your nose in the air, and say: 'I was certain there was something defective about that drainage.'"

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Besides, it is my turn now to have my way, and we'll compromise on linen."

That settled it, and in the evening the holiday appropriation bill came up before the house for discussion. I flatly refused to visit Apponegansett and asserted that it was my turn to have my way. So Newport it was to be.

The next day I appeared with red and swollen eyelids and said: "Donkey dear, aren't you ashamed of your stupidity? Couldn't you see it was all a ruse of mine about the kitchen sink. There is nothing the matter with the plumbing—at least nothing more than usual, only I wanted to dispute about something so as to give you your way, then it would be my turn to decide about going to Newport. Wasn't it perfectly horrid of me?" Here it became necessary for me to hide my face on Jerry's manly breast, while I sobbed out: "Now I've got it all my own way by cheating the dearest boy in the whole world, it just breaks my

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

heart. I don't want to go to Newport, I want to go to Apponegansett. Will you ever forgive me, Jerry?"

At eleven o'clock the doorbell rang and a package was delivered containing twenty yards of lovely silk for a dress, and a card stating it was from a fond husband who compromised *on silk*.

I made up my mind that would be the first and last time I would ever cheat Jerry.

Thy repentant cousin,

Bashy.

September 1st, 1847.

Dear Deborah:

Yes, we did go to Apponegansett and we had a perfectly splendid time, as splendid as Jerry knows how to make it when he gives his whole mind to it, which on this occasion he was morally bound to do. Thee should have seen him showing off the beach and the waves as if they were his own peculiar posses-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

sions in which he took great pride. It is a spot where Allah keeps no tab on the hours. Long days of enjoyment of the *fresh salt air*. Nights of early to bed when a hooting owl in a nearby tree serves instead of the curfew bell. We may seek over all latitude and longitude before we find its equal. (Speaking of those imaginary lines it strikes me a Polish explorer would be the likeliest man to discover the Pole.) If any one inquires the location of this halcyon spot in order that he may spend a summer there too, I will not be selfish, I will tell him it is an obscure village in unobscure Massachusetts. Remember the Italian who told us we have an awful climate but good enough for those who live in it, meaning we are used to it and do not mind it, but it sounds as if it was as good as we deserved.

Grandfather's house is unaltered from the days of the first settlers, and glad was I that there were no modern im-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

provements, for such bread and cake and pies and puddings had never before titillated my palate, as came forth from that monster brick oven after it had been filled with live coals from the great wood fire in the enormous fireplace, thoroughly heated and then swept and garnished from the ashes.

We often hear the expression "the beef is done *to a turn*." For the first time I realized the true inwardness of its meaning, as I watched a long steel rod run through a big piece of meat and placed in the great tin oven with the open side towards the fire of mammoth logs on the brick hearth (which, to guard against fire from the hickory sparks, extends over half the great kitchen floor) and saw the turnspit dog set to turn, turn, turn the wheel that turned the rod. I pitied him on his enforced treadmill, but the end justified the means. Such luscious meat is never seen on modern dinner tables. We might well say

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

with Miss Mitford's finical bachelor, "The meat was done to *half* a turn." As old Isaak Walton says, "This dish of meat is too good for any but anglers or very honest men." As belonging to the latter class we claim our innings.

Poor old dog, he knew when Monthly Meeting came round as well as the clerk himself, and always had to be shut up a day or two beforehand, or else on that eventful morning he would disappear only to come skulking home after dark, preferring to take the beating, which he knew awaited him, to passing an hour on that dreaded platform. In case of such disappearance, in order to save the guests from going dinnerless or at least beefless to their distant homes, the meat was hung in the roasting jacks which were tied to a long cord suspended from the high mantel shelf and left to rotate before the fire, but somehow a certain element was lacking to this manner of cooking, and the taste was not so delicious.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Occasionally we went out sailing. We employed a funny old one-eyed skipper who said you could only use one eye with a spy glass so what was the good of two? If the water was still as a mill-pond and we were becalmed it was very enjoyable to sit on the deck and watch the great ships farther out at sea "hull down" over the convexity of the earth until the tip of the tallest mast disappeared. We wondered how anyone witnessing that simple test could believe in the earth's flatness rather than his own. At other times the wind rose and the waves permitted no wondering about anything except in dull impersonal fashion whether I could possibly survive to reach shore. I did not want to spoil Jerry's pleasure, but I could not keep the color in my face. He watched me, and when I grew pale it was "about ship" for home. One day we were pretty far out, a sudden breeze sprang up. Someone sang "Old Sam Dusenberry" with a tin

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

pan accompaniment. There were ninety-nine verses; all alike. About the middle of the symphony I gave up the ghost and was buried in the ocean, at least that is my recollection of that sailing party. I died just after a man offered me a bowl of steaming chowder with onions in it. That obliging sailor came near scudding down to a watery grave, before he was rescued from Jerry's clutch.

There is one thing worse than high winds, big waves, or even mountainous billows, that is anchoring for blue-fishing when there is a chopping swell on, after a three days' northeaster. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon." The mere recollection of it actually paralyzes my vocabulary and makes language of no avail. One day when I was not sea sick I learned the names of the Islands before me, though they were worse than the Grand Panjandrum; they are, Naushon, Nonamesset, Onatonka, and Wepecket, Nashawena,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Peskinese, Cuttyhunk and Penikese. What's the use of being learned unless you let people know it?

To change the subject, one of the natives who calls herself "an embryo poetess" was so astonished at Jerry's prowess in the character of a clam-digger that she wrote some verses in celebration thereof and so will his name go down the ages. I will give thee a taste of her quality, premising that a summer boarder had said: "That man! why he has only to stand on the beach and call the bivalves for them to come running, and here have I been on my hands and knees for two hours in the broiling hot sun and have only secured twenty-three clams to make a chowder for twenty-four people."

THE CLAMOLOGIST.

"I've seen many human beings here,
Who love this rocky shore,
They seldom come in winter,
In summer they come more.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

"A man's been here this year,
Who's made his life sublime,
I think you'll find his footsteps yet
Upon the sands of Time.

"I've seen men come and seen men go
But never man like this;
In birds and flowers and rocks and clams,
He found such perfect bliss.

"A Clamologist I think he was,
His fad was digging clams,
There ne'er has been man like him
Since the days of Shem and Ham.

"Why these clams will not leave their rocky beds
Unless their names they hear;
They've been so bewitched by this strange man
Who spent the summer here.

"Every day he called the roll
In accents loud and strong
They all replied in unison
And *clamorous* was the air."

Everything is so quiet, if I but tie my
shoe string it sounds like a span of horses

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

trotting over the planks of Padanaram Bridge.

I do not need to inform thee that Padanaram is not an Indian name, as most people imagine. Thy long years of teaching in our First Day School have impressed it on thy mind as the name of the place where Laban lived, Laban who was the brother-in-law of Isaac, who was the husband of Rebekah, who was the mother of Esau, and his canny twin, Jacob.

If any doubting disciple consults the post office Directory of these United States and triumphantly announces that there is not such a village in Massachusetts, tell him if he will address a letter of inquiry to the postmaster of South Dartmouth enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, he will receive the information that the proper name of the place is South Dartmouth but once there was a man named Laban who settled there and some would-be wag christened

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

his home Padanaram. I aver that the name stuck and is now to be read on many street cars to and from the city to testify if I lie.

Speaking of Massachusetts, one old woman said to another:

"Judge B has become a Catholic."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I was just told he has gone to Plymouth mass."

One day we attended meeting in the ancient Friends' Meeting House where Jerry's grandparents were married.

A marriage was to take place there that day, for that reason a good many people from town were present, attracted by curiosity to witness that rare event, a Quaker wedding.

A Friend preacher took for the text of her sermon: "What went ye out in the wilderness for to see?" It had an application which she did not intend, and some of us could not forbear an indecorous smile. I did not dare to look at Jerry,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

but I could feel in the back of my head that he was trying to catch my eye.

After the wedding party retired there was a funeral. I was thankful Jerry was on the men's side of the house out of ear-shot. Whatever would he have done in my place? Either roared or burst a blood vessel, and I do not know which would have been worse. A woman by my side deliberately turned her white kid gloves inside out, turned them back, picked out the fingers in painstaking fashion as though she had all the time there is, pulled each finger straight one by one, stretched the gloves on her knees, folded them carefully, placed them in tissue paper and consigned them to the depths of her pocket. Then she drew forth a pair of black kids and slowly fitted them to her hands. They were new, and it took time and effort. When the task was accomplished to her entire satisfaction she whispered to me: "I wore white

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

gloves for the bride, now I wear black ones for the remains."

Thine as ever,
Bathsheba.

September 18th, 1848.

Dear Deborah:

What strange things do happen and keep on happening to me. This enthusiastic husband of mine was so much delighted with Texas when he was in the war that he has been possessed ever since to go there to live. At last I had consented and we were all packed up expecting to leave the next week, but poor father died very suddenly, and when the will was read we found the farm and house were given to us on condition that we lived there, and his bank stock to his sailor son who would have no use for a farm. Of course mother would have her home with us. The will was written before there was any talk of going to Texas and had not been changed. It

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

was a blow to Jerry, for his heart was set on that "lone star." But there were too many GTT notices to please me. Thee knows GTT means "Gone to Texas," and almost every scamp in the country left those letters for a p. p. c. card, and I did not believe we should enjoy their company. It will take a century for the descendants of these good-for-nothings to become enlightened and fit to live with our descendants. Thee may wonder where my descendants are to come from, and I will inform thee that I already have a little Jerry towards it. He is two months old, and if I don't kill him hugging him, is likely to live to be a man and carry on the very desirable lineage of the good old Quaker stock. As the minister said when he had a particularly unbeautiful baby to baptize, and it was expected he should praise it: "Well, that *is* a baby." Jerry Junior has his father's big eyes, his mother's big feet, and his own big voice. He commenced his earthly career

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

with such a screech that his father heard it down two flights of stairs, and solemnly ejaculated: "Thank God." I have not heard of his praising the Lord at any of the subsequent shrieks. I was not so piously inclined as his father. I said: "Yes, my lad, you have made your first appearance in a world of woe, and you do well to yell."

Oh Deborah! What an awful time I did have learning to wash and dress that obstreperous boy baby. He had such very pronounced objections to soap and water, that although it was an uncommonly hot July, I could hear the windows slammed down all up the street when the ear piercing outcry began. We were staying in town to be near a doctor in case baby might have croup or colic. The thought that the inhabitants were smothering themselves on my account did not make me any more skilful. I never knew a wet baby was such a slippery thing. I hurried and pricked myself

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

and the baby, then all that had gone before was a mere tuning of the instruments; now it equalled a full brass band; until I felt like slapping him. And mother did not improve matters by opening her door and remarking to nobody in particular: "Here's a pretty kettle of fish." But when the bath and dressing were completed, and the waiting citizens had opened their windows to the balmy breezes, and the baby all fluffy white looked up in my face and cooed with a drop of milk on the end of his pug nose, I would not have changed places with a queen on her throne.

I never loved anything quite so much since the days when the old rag doll slept in my arms in the crib.

How we used to laugh at Melindy Smith with her first baby. Now I am as bad as she, and *worse*. I can see in imagination the glorified expression which overspread Melindy's physiognomy as she expatiated on the supernatural bright-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

ness of her infant. One particular wonderment about him was, that when he was only two days old he looked at her and *breathed*.

I have had an opposite experience with my baby. One day when he was asleep he drew his breath so softly that I imagined he was dead. Awe-stricken I dared not touch him, but held a hand glass before his lips, no moisture dimmed its brightness. Then in my agony of fright I snatched him up in the fraction of a second with such "gun suddenness" that he broke into a yell that proved beyond a doubt that there was nothing corpse-like in his present condition and completely revived my fainting heart. All the rest of that day the angelic cherub avenged his broken nap by being as cross as two sticks, but I did not mind a little thing like that, so long as he *breathed and breathed*. Most astounding that breathing you know. Melindy was right, it certainly is.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

“Oh, blossom boy! so calm in thy repose,
So sweet a compromise of life and death.”

Breathing is astonishing, but the first smile is entrancing. Jerry says: “Tell Cousin Deborah baby is not a victim of salivation from overdoses of calomel, though she will be apt so to diagnose his case when she becomes the recipient of his wet-mouthed kisses. Furthermore inform her that Fanny Elssler is not in it. What is putting one’s toe on the mantel-piece compared to putting it between one’s toothless gums? Besides, and more important than all the rest, my asters are all disasters.” Jerry is very practical.

Thy cousin
Bathsheba.

July 1, 1850.

Dear Deborah:

We have returned from our trip to England, having been from home only eight weeks, for we could not leave Baby

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

for long, or thought we could not; however, we saw a good deal in a short time. I call Jerry Junior "Baby," but he calls himself "Papa's man." He is a prodigy, and has learned at two years of age something I have not learned in a quarter of a century, namely, how to govern a maternal ancestor. He does it just as easy, without giving it a thought. I'd like him to try his method on his grandmother, he would find timber of a different fibre there.

Thee asks me to describe the thing which I remember most distinctly of all I saw in England. I can answer without hesitation London Yearly Meeting of Friends. I did not care to go there because it was the day reserved for the Tower of London and the sight of the crown jewels seemed more attractive than the sight of "broad brim hats" and "plain bonnets," but we went and I do not regret it.

It happened strangely enough that the

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

very day we were there, a man was also present who is much better qualified than I am to do justice to the subject, so I will copy for thee the description he has given. First stating that Elihu Burrett, or "The Learned Blacksmith" as he is called, knows very little about Friends, but he has given a striking picture of Eli and Sybil Jones, with whose life work we are all so familiar. He did not know that the nasal tone of Eli Jones' voice is due not to the effect of his Yankee breeding, but is caused by a natural defect in his throat.

Elihu Burrett writes:

"May 21st, 1850.

"This was a day of deep interest. I went in the morning to the meeting for public worship in the Devonshire House, which was filled to its utmost capacity with Friends from every part of the kingdom. As a spectacle no human congregation can surpass it, in its impressive physiognomy. The immaculate purity of the women's dresses, as they sat a multitude of shining ones, arising in low, quiet rows from the floor to the

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

gallery on one side of the house, and the grave mountain of sedate and thoughtful men on the other side, presented an aspect more suggestive of the New Jerusalem, than of any earthly congregation. A deep devotional silence settled down upon the great assembly, like an overshadowing presence from Heaven. The still up breathing prayer of a thousand souls seemed to ascend like incense, and the communion of the Holy Spirit to descend like a dove, whose wing beats touched to sweeter serenity those faces so calm with the divine benediction. How affecting was the heart worship of those silent moments. There was something solemn beyond description in the presence of a thousand persons of all ages so immovable that they scarcely seemed to breathe. The ministers' gallery was occupied by a long rank of the fathers and mothers of the Church, who presided over the great communion like shepherds sitting down before their quiet flocks by the still waters of Salvation. In the center sat a man and woman, a little past the meridian of life, and apparently strangers. The man had an American look, which was quite perceptible from the opposite end of the building, and when he slowly rose out of the deep silence, his first words confirmed the impression. They were words fitly spoken and solemn, but

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

uttered with such a nasal intonation as I never heard before even in New England. At first I doubted whether this exaggerated peculiarity would not lessen the salutary effect of his exhortation upon the minds of his hearers. But his words cleared up little by little from this nasal cadence. They grew stronger and fuller, and the Truth made them free and flowing, and his sermon grew more and more impressive to the end. He spoke for nearly an hour, and when he sat down and buried his spare figure under his broad brimmed hat, and the congregation settled into profound stillness I doubted whether it would be broken again. But after the lapse of a few minutes a woman who sat by the side of the American preacher—she was his wife—arose calm, meek and graceful. Her first words dropped with sweetest cadence upon the still congregation, and were heard in every part of the house, though they were uttered in a voice seemingly but little above a whisper. Each succeeding sentence warbled into new beauty and fulness of silvery intonation. Her topic was the religion of the heart, as contrasted with the mere language of the tongue. Having meekly stated her subject she uncovered her head, as if involuntarily in reverence to that vision of divine truth unsealed to her waiting eyes, and it seemed to beam in

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

her eyes with a serene and heavenly light, and to burn in her heart with holy inspiration, to touch her lips and every gentle motion of her person with a beautiful, eloquent and solemn expression, as her words fell in the sweet music of her voice on the rapt assembly. I never saw an assembly so subdued to motionless meditation, and the silence deepened to more profound stillness when she ceased to speak. The man next me whispered: 'A sybil, she is rightly named.' Then she knelt in prayer. At the first words the whole congregation rose. The men who had worn their hats while she spoke to them uncovered their heads while she spoke to God. Her voice trembled while she pleaded fervently for a blessing. When she rose from her knees the congregation sat down as it were beneath the shadow of that prayer.

"In a few minutes two of the Fathers of the Society sitting in the center of the ministers' gallery shook hands with each other and were followed by others, as a kind of mutual benediction as well as a sign that the meeting was ended. At this simple signal the congregation rose and quietly left the house."

Thee will think, Deborah, that I am changed from the days when I was fretted

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

by the peculiarities and prejudices of Quakerism. Indeed I am. Now that I have freed myself from those exactions I can see the beauty of the religion behind them. To-day while reading my favorite Elia I came upon the place where Charles Lamb eulogized the silent meetings of the Quakers. He advises all to read John Woolman's Journal and get it by heart. I thought of the time when I considered that same Journal a wearisome bore. I picked up the book and soon became interested in it. How the pendulum swings and reverses the assured dictum of childhood. I found a note by the editor which contains an account of John Woolman's arrival and reception in London. As it is not in the earlier editions I will copy it for thee.

"The vessel reached London on the morning of the fifth day of the week, and John Woolman, knowing that the Yearly Meeting was then in session lost no time in reaching it. Coming into the meeting of Ministers late and unannounced

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

his peculiar dress and manner excited attention and apprehension that he was an itinerant enthusiast. He presented his certificate from Friends in America, but the dissatisfaction still remained, and some one remarked that perhaps the stranger Friend might feel that his dedication of himself to this apprehended duty was accepted without further labor, and that he might now feel free to return to his home. John Woolman was silent for a space. He was profoundly affected by this unfavorable reception. In the love of Christ and his fellow men he had at a painful sacrifice left behind the peace and endearments of his home. That love still flowed toward the people of England, must it thenceforth be pent up in his own breast. He rose at last and stated that he could not feel released from his prospect of visiting meetings in England, yet he could not travel in the ministry without the approval of Friends, and while that was withheld he could not feel easy to be of any cost to them; he could not go back as had been suggested, but he was acquainted with a mechanical trade and while the impediment to his service remained he hoped Friends would be willing to employ him in such business as he was capable of, that he might not be chargeable to any.

“A deep silence prevailed over the assembly,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

many of whom were touched by the wise simplicity of the stranger's words and manner. After a time John Woolman felt that words were given to utter as a minister of Christ. The spirit of his Master bore witness to them in the hearts of his hearers. When he closed the Friend who had advised his return to America, rose and confessed his error and avowed his full unity with the stranger. All doubt was removed, there was a general agreement and expression of sympathy, and John Woolman owned by his brethren passed on to his work."

If John Woolman had been as fastidious as Elizabeth Fry he would never have made a hasty toilet in the steerage of an Atlantic ship and presented himself all ungroomed before the spick and span members of London Yearly Meeting.

Elizabeth Fry was always dressed with exquisite neatness, and the following anecdote shows to what an extent she carried her idea of its importance. While on her missionary voyage to America she was invited to address the passengers and crew on Sunday morning. Mrs. Fry said

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

she must have a fresh cap and shawl before she could do so, as it was impossible to exert a good influence in tumbled clothing. She was told no one would notice the difference, however she insisted, and the crew rummaged the hold of that vessel under the superintendence of the captain, until the right trunk was found, carried on deck and opened, a silken shawl and a perfectly new cap of diaphanous muslin extracted and taken to her state-room, where they were carefully donned, the crimped borders of the cap daintily tied under the chin, and the three plaits in the shawl fastened mathematically straight on the shoulders.

It is known that Mrs. Fry's spotless raiment exerted a refining influence on the female prisoners of Newgate. Whether it appealed to the sailors who searched the stifling hold of that ship is an open question. I asked Jerry's opinion just now, and all he said was, "That caps the climax however."

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Voltaire says: "I am addressing myself
—addressing myself to my cap."

Here is Thomas Hood's opinion of
Elizabeth Fry's labors in Newgate Prison.

"I like your chocolate, good Mistress Fry!
I like your cookery in every way;
I like your shrove-tide service and supply;
I like to hear your sweet Pandeans play;
I like the pity in your full-brimmed eye;
I like your carriage and your silken gray;
Your dove-like habits and your silent preaching,
But I don't like your *Newgatory* teaching."

Meaning I suppose that it is better to
teach the young and innocent than the
old and vicious, but he does not remember
the awful state of the prisons before
philanthropists began their labors in that
direction, else he would not call her work
nugatory. *Cousin Bashy.*

October 30th, 1850.

Dear Deborah:

The Fates have not yet done with us.
As usual things keep on happening to me.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

My uncle James has died and left his enormous fortune to me. I was perfectly astounded, for he always said his money would go to found a "Home for Indigent Females." Perhaps that is what it really will do, for besides my mother and myself we now have two young ladies dependent on us who have not a penny to their names, which by the bye are Mollie and Sallie. I wanted to call them Deborah and Bathsheba, but mother love prevailed. I could not saddle my innocent babies with such old time names. Jerry complained to me on their first arrival: "You don't respond to my *sallies*. I shall only put forth this last *Sally*," and he held up the new baby twin, and asked why she resembled "Old Uncle Ned." I had just vitality enough to answer: "Because she has no wool on the top of her head where the wool ought to grow." I never saw any red wool, but as sure as I live I saw a red fuzz on the top of that baby's head.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

“Yes,” said Jerry, “that is the way I knew which was Sallie.” I have always thought that girl twins looking alike and dressed alike were the cunningest things in creation: but what is to be done if one of them has black hair and the other red? Jerry drew a long breath and wondered how he should support such a rapidly increasing family. Now his mind is at ease. We have enough to provide for several pairs of twins. Meanwhile we are to build a house large enough to hold all that come, the more the merrier. It will be great fun to build a house. It shall be set four square to the sun, and sunshine shall be its finest adornment. The gay sunbeams shall dance and the wild winds shall revel around it. The first thing I have planned is the nursery. It is to have six sunny windows, two fire-places, one at each end of the long room. A whole row of small white beds. Books and toys without end. Come and see.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

It is clearly my duty to rectify any oversight on the part of the dear old chap, therefore before any of the money is spent, the first thing to do is to provide for Uncle Jim's other nieces and his nephews. I wish thee had been one of his blood kin. But Uncle Jim was father's brother, and thy mother is my mother's sister, so you do not make connections any better than some railroads I could mention. Never mind, just thee hold on to thy Aunt Priscilla, she is better than a legacy any day in the week. Priscilla is not a bad name. Why could not mother have named me after herself. It is a Bible name all right, and would be better than

Bathsheba.

P. S. Speaking of the Bible, does thee remember the curious story which has come down from Revolutionary times of a family who left their house at the burning of this town by the British soldiers

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

and fled to the woods, but found on their return after the departure of the troops, everything exactly as they left it, except that the family Bible was gone? Lately the Bible has been returned, traced by the Family Record. Ever since it was stolen, "convey" the wise call it, that Bible has been as much a part of the camp equipage as the flag of their country, and wherever the regiment has gone that Bible has gone too, even to India. There must have been some curious superstition connected with it. I should like to hear it. This anecdote is history, not fiction.

September 10th, 1854.

Dear Cousin:

The house is at last completed. We have moved into it, and are nearly settled. The "Nature Critic" from Godey's Lady's Book came to exploit us to-day. I do not know whether she approved of us (for I was out in the pony carriage with the children, Jerry Junior acting

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

charioteer to his great delight) but I presume *not*. She approves of very few things. One of her latest criticisms is this: "The arch of the rainbow is good, but the tone of the coloring too high, and the blending of colors unfortunate." She also states that sunsets are frequently over-charged with color. Her hobby is a color compound of sage green, chocolate brown and pumpkin yellow, but she will not find it at our house. The primary colors for me.

There is one person not a critic, whom I am anxiously expecting to occupy a certain sunny room, in the south east corner of the second story, the said room being marked in small gilt letters on the panel of the door, "Cousin Deborah's Room." It is furnished wholly with things which came from our grandmother, thy grandmother and mine. What would she say if she could see the fine mansion in which her furniture is now bestowed? I seem to see her shake

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

her head while she repeats doubtfully: "I hope it will not be a snare to Bashy but it is of the world, worldly."

The ancient highboy is there, (which is believed on the best authority to have come over in that well stored furniture ship, the Mayflower), and upon which I once climbed and brought to the floor with a mighty crash. Humpty Dumpty had a terrific fall, but the highboy and low girl came out of the scrimmage unharmed. As I picked myself up I remarked casually, to avoid a scolding: "Granny, that was more good luck than good management." She shook her finger at me and murmured reverentially: "Providential, my child." I marvelled if Providence watched over high boys as well as low girls, and if we were to be preserved from harm, why we were not preserved from tipping over in the first place.

The drawers of the historic highboy are kept empty for thy use. The bunch

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

of peacock's feathers hangs over it, as in the days of yore. They never brought ill luck to our grandmother; I do not believe they will to thee or me.

Thee asks for a description of the house. The drawing-room is a magnificent affair, quite resplendent with mirrors and chandeliers, and girandoles which double the apparent size of the room and then fade away into a vista of further rooms. A reminiscence of the Astor House, which had long haunted my dreams. Really I can convey no idea of our splendors. It is absolutely necessary to see them. When will thee come?

To think we owe all this to Uncle Jim, whose overshoes I laughed at, little dreaming of the great gift of which they were the precursors, though I think now he gave a little hint of what was coming when he wrote: "I want to give you something that will keep you out of the mud." I do wish that he had told us of

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

his will, so that we could have thanked him and shown our gratitude, which now we never can. According to Jerry a pedigree is becoming a fashionable fad and he is planning a coat-of-arms to hang in the hall, a pair of rubber overshoes, sable, rampant, on a field gules. This reminds me of General Jackson, who told father his *coat of arms* was nothing but a pair of *shirt-sleeves*.

We did not forget the debt of gratitude we owed Jerry's nurses in the Mexican hospital, and I would have loved to send a remembrance to General Taylor, though he did call us fools, but he died before we knew of the money.

Thee will be weary of hearing so much of ourselves, so I will try other subjects for a change, though I suspect it will be as difficult for me to keep Jerry out of the story as it was for Mr. Dick to keep King Charles' head out of his memorial.

Last evening the company told stories

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

concerning the sagacity of animals. The one told by a visitor took the cake.

She said: "Once when I was driving my favorite horse who knows everything, we came to a place where there is a short road over a steep hill, (I suppose a Hollander would call it mountain) and a longer road around it. I inclined to take the shorter way, but the horse absolutely refused to budge in that direction, so I was obliged to give up and go around Robin Hood's barn. When I reached home I found one of the traces very weak. Then I knew that that wonderful animal knew that trace would not stand the strain of the hill, but would hold together on level ground until he could get me home without running any risk of his running away."

A cruel disillusioner suggested that the reason the horse would not take the short cut was that he did not care to drag the wagon over the mountain, but the rest of the company hurraed for the lady and

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

her horse and voted to sentence the doubting Thomas to State Prison for life.

Then I queried about the difference between State Prison and States Prison. No one could tell except Jerry who is like the horse and knows a weak *trace* even when he does not see it. He guessed a States Prison was reserved for political criminals and as Mr. Perry was only a common scoundrel his place was in the State Prison or more properly in the House of Correction or Detention, that we would detain him till he had eaten his ice cream and cake then let him go.

Oh dear! There's that troublesome Jerry, well he can't poke himself into this tale for he is not a member of the cabinet and never will be.

There was a good parody in the newspaper last week by the bewildered Secretary of William L. Marcy at Washington. He could not find his employer, who was summoned in hot haste to the White House, and in his excitement over his

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

unsuccessful search he exclaimed excitedly:

"That marcy I to others show
That marcy show to me!"

Jerry is not in this either, though I expect he would be if there were Church wardens in the Friends' Society.

One thing I like very much about Friends is that they do not pass around things resembling corn poppers in meeting for the collection of contributions, but just pay their assessments once a year outside of meeting. Mother says: "It is more seemly." For once she and I agree. Thine

Bashy.

March 1st, 1856.

Dear Deborah:

Of course there were some disappointments connected with building the house. There is nothing perfect in this world, excepting Jerry. There is only one of

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

him. He says he is a tolerable husband as husbands go but only an adumbration of the husband Bashy deserves. He does love long words. If thee does not know adumbration I will tell thee as I used to in the old school days, look it up in the dictionary. I had to. I told the painters I wanted the nursery wall rose pink, and the woodwork sky-blue. If we should see the sky the color that woodwork was first painted we would believe the end of the world was upon us, and a rose of the hue of those walls would be the despair of the novelty gardeners, and worth more money than the golden rose the pope blesses and sends to his best parishioner.

By the way I have found out some things about Catholics since my quest in the days of the pioneer Bridget. Aunt Nabby's prophecy has come to pass sooner than she predicted. She has lived to see both church and priest, and we are none the worse for it, perhaps

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

rather the better. No Protestants have as yet been burned at the stake as was foretold about the time poor Bridget arrived on the scene.

Bridget's name brings me to the most unaccountable event of my life, an unsolvable puzzle for me to ponder over. I have always been fond of puzzles, here is one to last me my lifetime. It is more than a conundrum, it is a problem in "Abnormal Psychology." Thee will remember how often thee has heard me say: "I can dress the twins alike but I cannot induce them to look alike." I wanted they should be as nearly alike as two peas, so no one could tell them apart except their mother and themselves. One of them might say: "I am Sallie," and by elimination or exclusion we would conclude the other was Mollie. Look at them now! They grow more and more unlike every day. Mollie is my very image, but Sallie? Whom does Sallie resemble? Resemble, do I say? No,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

not resemble. She is an absolute replica, a perfect copy of no one on earth or in heaven but Irish Bridget, the waitress at our old boarding school. The same turkey's egg freckles, on the same pug nose, the same carrotty red hair, the same long-lashed gray eyes. I wonder she has no brogue. It almost makes me frantic to look at her. The Madonna's halo was nothing to this living breathing mystery. Sometimes I look at Sallie and in my thoughts I ask her the old question: "Bridget, is this *all?*" and get for reply: "Yes, bedad it is." I say to myself, no more brothers or sisters to come from Ireland or *elsewhere*. The row of white beds in the nursery will remain empty unless the twins fill them for me with grandchildren. Still it is not so bad as it might have been. Suppose the small heads had lain on the pillows and then been taken away; that would have been harder to bear. A numerous family is not our brag crop.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

But I do wish I could find out why Sallie looks like Bridget. That is the beatermost. Jerry says he does not mind Bridget, only he does wish she had been a little handsomer, or at least a little more *choice* in the *choice* of her hirsute color scheme, however he is glad Sallie was not born with the letters D. A. R. tattooed on her round arm, or with lace ruffles falling over her dimpled fists.

Ever thine,
Bathsheba.

New Year's Day, 1858.

Dear Deborah:

I have been looking over my journal of "Little Willie Anecdotes," as Jerry has dubbed them, and feel inclined to select a few for thy benefit. They will not bore thee, because thee loves my children so well. Thee says: "Precisely the same as if they were my own." I know better, but it is nice to play it is true.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

When Jerry Junior was about three years old he was left alone in the library for a few moments. On my return I found he had pushed a chair beneath the large map of the United States, climbed on it and stretching up his wee figure appeared to be looking intently for something. As I approached quickly, fearing a tumble, he turned to me and announced: "Papa's man is looking for Connecticut." Show me the three year old who can discount that.

My hopeful son developed an early enthusiasm for steam power of all kinds, more especially as exhibited in locomotives, and whenever he was unable to feast his eyes on the genuine article, he saw in all the household chairs and tables possible combinations of locomotives, tenders, baggage cars, dining cars, day cars, and sleeping cars.

Objections being sometimes offered to such an arrangement of parlor furniture, he then placed pencil and paper at the

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

disposal of his family and urged them to draw "choo-choos." Papa had become very expert by much practice and continuous criticism, until he could delineate the driving wheels, the connecting rod, the boiler, the cowcatcher, the smokestack, the eccentric, the fireman, the bell, the bell rope, the cab, the fire-box, the throttle, and the whistle. Finally his ambition soared above and beyond the customary bare outlines of his sketch. He thought to achieve a pictorial triumph by *shading* his picture in true artistic style, but alas! His tender offspring climbed upon his knees for a nearer view, burst into tears and exclaimed: "I don't want it all covered with hairs! 'Taint a bufflum!"

When we moved into the new house, Jerry Junior had just attained to the dignity of boots. His favorite cat had declined a change of residence, and cat-like, preferring places to people, had taken French leave and retired to her

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

former place of abode. Jerry Junior went in search of her but returned catless, saying he saw kitty but she ran away from him. "I don't think she knew me in my new boots," was his sage conclusion. In his spiritual exaltation over his foot-gear, he inquired if Heavenly Father wore boots.

I once listened to the following conversation. "Mollie, where did you get that apple? That looks like one of my apples," said Jerry Junior.

"On Yerry's table," was the reply.

"That is stealing. Don't you know God sees you all the time just as he saw Eve when *she* stole the apple?"

"Dod knows I ikes apples," said the impenitent thief taking a large bite from the Seek-no-further.

Here I interposed, saying: "Jerry, don't be harsh with your sister. Remember she is a very little girl, nothing but a baby."

"She is older than Eve was, when

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

God drove her out of the garden for eating apples she knew she must not touch." Then he paused in his philippic to wonder "if Adam and Eve sat on the back seat of the carriage and God, on the coachman's box when he *drove* them out of Eden."

One day we drove down to our old farm for a supply of eggs and cream. We were greeted in most excited fashion by Pat, son of Patrick, with his hair sticking through the crown of his straw hat and his china-blue eyes bulging with horror: "The twinty-siven coos ha' bin in the coorn all the day an' they'll all lay stritched out ded in a row in the moorn." I looked at the massive stone wall between the corn and the pasture, and compared our animals to Mother Goose's Cow, which was such an athletic sport. Jerry Junior began a loud lamentation. Would the bossy calf that came last week die too? Did I think it had eaten enough corn to kill it. No, I did

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

not. I was very decided on that point, but incautiously added, if its mother died it would be apt to die too. Then Jerry's tears flowed abundantly and he sobbed out: "If you died because you had eaten too much green corn would I have to die too?" Sallie said reprov-ingly: "If mamma died, you *ought* to want to die too. I *should*."

This Indian suttee widow sentiment in Sallie was very touching, only she rather injured its effect by whispering to Mollie:

"I do not believe I should die though; I would be like Mike Maloney, he wanted to jump in the grave and be buried with Ellen, only they wouldn't let him, and the next day he was better and went to the horse trot, and in a week he wanted to get married to our washerwoman."

I fear me Sallie and Mike resemble the mourners who take their bereavements to Europe, "just for the dish-strack-shun of it" as Mike explained when the priest spoke to him about his sudden recovery.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Like the historic widower he probably thought, if he "waited ever so long she wouldn't be any deader."

Jerry Junior's first essay in love making took place in school during the German recitation, when he passed a soiled, crumpled piece of paper to Mamie Dove inscribed with this harmonious poetical effusion:

to mamy dove
the girl i love.

Then to show his proficiency in the languages he followed up his declaration with the German equivalent with Yankee pronunciation:

"ik libby dick."

Was not this well done, and worthy of his father's son? Though I doubt if he sticks to his first love as his father did to his!

One night Jerry Junior preferred saying his prayers kneeling on my lap with

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

his arms around my neck, as being a more comfortable place for his devotions than the floor at my knee. At the conclusion of his regular prayer he still had something more on his mind. He bade God a friendly goodnight, and looking around the room said expansively: "Good night washstand, good night table, good night rocking chair and please God bless my mother, she is a peach." I thought the close of his peroration rather fine and original, though alas a peach has a stone for a heart, but Jerry meant well.

The night before the Fourth I told the children if they were going to get up before daylight to explode fire crackers I must put them to bed very early. In the hot summer afternoon they had pillow fights and capered under tents made of sheets and did all sorts of things except go to sleep. About five o'clock Sallie said: "Let's say our prayers, that always makes us sleepy." The soporific prescription soon took effect. Three

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

drowsy curly heads were bowed on the beds and I picked up the children one after the other without disturbing their slumbers and they knew nothing more until the dawn of Independence Day. Then Jerry Junior arose in his might and fired a bunch of cannon crackers in the closed drawer of the very washstand on which he had recently called down a blessing. This explosion wakened the twins and soon the fun waxed fast and furious, after their father joined the party it became uproarious. He came tooting a tin horn, such a hullabaloo I never heard. The country is always safe in Jerry's hands. Here is his extemporaneous overture. I believe some irregularities of meter are allowable in impromptu odes.

Owed to a bright tin horn,
As sure as you are born
'Twas early heard in the morn
Which it came to adorn.
(flourish of horns)

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Here is my little strawberry
My duckie down derry,
She says: "Yes, go it, Jerry,
And make us all merry!"
(fanfaronade of horns)

Here's a tall bloomin' twin
And she laughs through the din
And she says: "Toot like sin!"
Here's another smaller twin,
And she says, "Oh, he'll win
Though his horn be made of tin."
(clang of horns)

Here's a very scampish boy,
He says: "Give me my toy
And music without alloy
Your souls shall never cloy."
(blare of horns)
(transfer to Jerry Junior)
tin-tin-nab-u-la-tion.

I joined Jerry Junior's German class
to improve my pronunciation. He has
two professors. One said to me in his
brusque fashion, with his nerves all on
edge "agaced" as he anglicized it. "Mrs.
Bathsheba, don't say *ish* like a German

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Jew, dat is not right." I would have liked to tell him that I would pronounce his *ch* when he pronounced my *th*. Next day the other teacher said to me in his polite way: "Cousin Bashy, it is a very little thing, hardly worth mentioning, but perhaps it would be better if you did not say *ik*."

"Oh dear!" said I, "I have tried both ways and neither is right."

"Suppose you try a third way—like this——"

Here the irrepressible Jerry broke in: (He is always as cocksure about everything as George the Third was that he could subdue the American rebels. Jerry Senior says "Be of good cheer, oh mother of him, when he is older he will not know so much.")

"See, mamma, put your tongue against your lower teeth and blow till you feel the wind in the roof of your mouth and say *ish* —no; *ik*—no—."

"Master Jerry, please allow your

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

instructor to instruct your mother.”
(*Sotto voce*) “Some one ought to take
that chap down a peg or two.”

And so the lesson went on, but I have
not acquired, nor in any number of years
shall I acquire their impossible method
of pronouncing *ch*.

At a party Jerry Junior named his
apple Mamie Dove, and counting the
apple seeds repeated the old New Eng-
land rhyme:

“One I love,
Two I love,
Three I love I say;
Four I love with all my heart,
And five I cast away.
Six he loves,
Seven she loves,
Eight they both love.
Nine he comes,
Ten he tarries,
Eleven he courts,
Twelve he marries.
Thirteen wishes.
Fourteen kisses.”

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I could not imagine where he had picked up this love test. He said papa told him when he was his little boy's age he named a great many apples Bashy, but unless the seeds counted "eight they both love" he always fed the apples to his pony. If the apple told the truth, he ate it himself. Jerry Junior's apple said: "Eleven he courts," which was satisfactory to both parties.

Mollie paid our marital felicity, Jerry's and mine, a very handsome, unconscious, inferential compliment, when she said: "Mother, I do not believe the people in the next house are married, for they quarrel all the time. I hear them when they are on the piazza, or whenever the windows are open. They sure cannot be married." How wide Mollie's eyes will open when she first hears the hum of the divorce mill in the land.

I must add to this chronicle of babyhood a good specimen of an Irish bull which occurred recently. It was not

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

second sight, but second hearing. Biddy is a fresh importation not prompt in answering door bells, her usual excuse being: "I do be havin' me hands in the dough," but on a recent call she had a brand new reason for her dilatoriness. I rang and rang. After long waiting the door opened, and before I said a word the girl exclaimed: "Be plazed to excuse me, Miss, I didn't hear yees till the second time ye'd rung."

As ever

Bathsheba.

August 16th, 1858.

Dear Deborah:

To-day I attended the twins while Nurse Jenkins attended her grandmother's funeral. I think those obsequies have been at least ten times celebrated since nurse has been with us.

The twins wanted to hear how their great-grandmother learned her letters. It goes without saying that they had

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

heard the story even oftener than nurse has buried her grandmother, but in either case it was a harmless repetition, giving nurse a chance to breathe the fresh air, and the children a much coveted opportunity to criticize their mother's accuracy, for if I say Jonas drove with Rollo out of the east gate and turned to the left, they scream in concert: "Oh, no, mother, he drove out of the west gate and turned to the right, thee knows thee always said he did." To-day I was very successful in telling the time honored tale exactly as I had told it a hundred times before. It goes on this wise: Great grandmother learned round o, crooked s, dotted i, crossed t, curly tail Q, broken-back k. They had names for all the other letters, but I only remember hammer hatted r. They thought the top of the letter r looked like the claw of a hammer, so it was r with a hat on its head. If they had to spell riots, this is the way they did it: Hammer hatted

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

r, dotted i, round o, crossed t, crooked s, riots.

In later days when your grandmother came on the scene and learned to spell, they pronounced every syllable, and I believe that is the proper way. Like this: C-o-n con, s-t-a-n stan, Constan, t-i ti, Constanti, n-o no, Constantino, p-l-e, pul, Constantinople.

Now you children rush at a ten letter word in a fashion which makes my head swim, and scatter vowels and consonants all over the floor, none of them by any chance falling in their proper places.

I hear there is a new method of learning to read talked of, which can never amount to anything, not to know the names of the letters, just to *look* at cat and *say* cat. It is too absurd, enough to make Susan Mariot rise from her grave without waiting for the resurrection day.

Another story, which has their Uncle Charley for its hero, is a great favorite with the girls. I always enter on this

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

narrative with fear and trembling, it is so difficult to remember the exact order in which he placed the pieces of the harnesses on the meal chest, but this is my best effort:

“There are in the world a few children who always want to help when their help is not desired, and are never ready to help when they could do so to advantage. Your Uncle Charley was a bright and shining example in that line; he had a perfect mania for helping in the wrong way, at the wrong time. He had seen a hired man take a simple plough-harness to pieces, oil it and put it together again. The brilliant idea struck him that it would be an excellent plan for him to get all the harnesses ready to clean. No sooner thought than done. He went to the harness room, climbed on a box, took down a dozen or more harnesses from the pegs, unbuckled every buckle, and arranged everything methodically on the top of the long meal chest. The back

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

row was devoted to reins, each neatly coiled. On the next row traces were laid out at full length. Then came a row of check reins, both over checks and others. Then a row of bits, curbs and snaffles. Next the saddles with their silver terrets made a fine display. The collars took up so much room that they were piled up. The blinders of various kinds stood up knowingly. Room was made for a row of breeching straps, also a row of cruppers, surcingles, and throat latches, lastly a row of short unclassified straps, for 'Charley boy' was nothing if not orderly. He was even accused of going to the hen-house at night to turn the hens on the roosts heads and tails all one way. In the midst of his final touches his father appeared upon the scene. He took the industrious Brownie by the ear and led him to the house, saying: 'I do believe the Evil One has helped thee on this job.' It was an unwritten law in the family that the children should not

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

be punished without their mother's knowledge and consent. She said: 'Considering the good intention the punishment ought not to be very severe.' 'A fig for his good intentions,' said her husband, 'It will take a harness maker to straighten out that mess.' And sure enough, it did. A man was brought from the next town and spent the greater part of a long summer day in company with those harnesses. He was not a Quaker but he used the plain language that day. Father said mother was seated on the Judicial Bench holding down the woolsack and dispensing justice by dispensing with justice, for the only punishment Charley had to undergo was to stand in a closet for half an hour, with the door wide open, for mother had a theory that if the door was closed he might be suffocated. There he stood and howled, while I kept on asking him: 'If thee doesn't like it, why doesn't thee come out?'"

At this juncture Sallie grew sleepy and inquired when nurse was coming back, and when they would get her grandmother buried to stay, so it would not have to be done over again. Mollie said Sallie could go to sleep if she wanted to, but for her part she was going to hear about grandfather's dinner in the woods and what he did not have to eat, and about the man who thought mamma was a nigger, and about our great aunt who papa said "came within an ace of getting scalped." She ordered the dinner first, and I obediently began:

"Once when grandfather was a young man he was in the wildest part of the wild woods." "Do wildcats live in the wild woods?" questioned Mollie. "No, goosie, they don't," came from the supposedly slumbering Sallie, "trees are never wild, they are always tame; it is only mother's wild imagination that is wild; I always make allowance for that."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I fear me Sallie will be sarcastic when she grows up and I shall stand in awe of her. However, that time is not yet, so I repeated in an emphatic manner: "In the wildest part of the wild woods he came upon a house which was just being built. It had neither door nor window, only openings left in the logs, but the roof was on, and the stone chimney was partly done. The owner was very proud of his work, for he had no help except from his wife and small children. He had cut down the trees, sawed them into logs with the help of his wife at the other end of the cross cut saw, piled them up as high as his head and plastered the spaces between the logs with mud, mixed for him by the two boys. They were in a great hurry to get it done before cold weather, for they had lived in a tent all summer. The man looked up, squinted at the sun, guessed it was noon and invited grandfather in to dinner. They had a rough board laid across two bar-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

rels for a table, and what do you suppose was on it?

"There was neither fish, flesh nor fowl, bread, butter, milk, eggs, cheese, tea, coffee, sugar, fruit, vegetables, nor even salt and pepper. The banquet consisted of beech-tree leaves and vinegar."

Having thought over the dinner as if she had never heard the story before, Mollie demanded the next number on the programme, and I began:

"When we lived in New York I taught in the colored Mission Sunday School. One day I took my class of a dozen girls for an afternoon picnic in Central Park. We patronized the street cars. Two men on the opposite side of the car seemed much interested in us. I overheard one of them say: 'It is amazing how nearly white some of these octoroons are. This woman would pass anywhere for white; she has not a single negro feature, but if we could see her finger nails we should

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

find the purple mark of the tar brush there, that test never fails.'

"When I paid my fares I took off my glove. The man stared hard at my hand for some time, then he muttered under his breath: 'By Jove! a nigger picnic personally conducted by a white woman. What won't these Yankees do?'"

One of these girls asked in school one Sunday: "Teacher, how old is the Bible?" I told her it was hundreds of years old, thousands of years old, older than she could have any idea of. Then she inquired in a drawling tone: "Was it wrote when you was a little girl?"

I asked Mollie if she thought the girl did not know any better, or if she was saucy. Mollie was sure she was an ignorant beggar. "You had taken her to the park and given her such a good time she *couldn't* mean to be saucy" was her conclusion. But Sallie waked up and flared up: "She was an impudent jade! Why didn't you punish her?" Then she

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

subsided on her pillows, saying to herself: "Though after all I can't see why it is impolite to tell people they are old, for everyone wants to live to be old, and no one ever thinks he is old enough to die." I thought of the saying: "Brought into life without his consent, and thrust out of it against his will." I might have moralized longer had not Mollie given an Indian war-whoop as a signal that she was ready to hear the scalping story, so I began:

"When my great aunt and your great great aunt,—” Here Mollie interrupted me to wonder if Aunt kept on getting a larger angel the longer she lived in Heaven how great she would be at the resurrection. Not being in a mood to be put through Mollie's Shorter Catechism, I shook my head and proceeded as mother used to do while she was "improving the occasion," expounding the law and the prophets.

"When Aunt Dorcas married Uncle

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Joshua they went to live among the Indians where there were very few white people. They lived in a log house with no floor but the bare ground, and no window but a hole in the wall. One day when she was all alone spinning flax on her little wheel and sitting in her high backed chair they had brought from home, she looked out of the window and saw about twenty Indians coming towards the house. They had on their war paint and looked perfectly frightful, swinging their tomahawks. Aunt Dorcas knew they were on the war-path and were coming to kill her, but she had heard if people were very brave it might possibly save their lives, so she kept on spinning and paid no attention when they came crowding into the room. They looked at her in astonishment. She whirled her wheel and drew out her thread, glancing at them as if she did not care a straw for the whole tribe. The chief came behind her brandishing his tomahawk in

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

the air over her head. Still the wheel whirled, and she sat undisturbed. Then the Indian cut the skein of flax hanging on the back of her chair, and fastened it in his belt alongside a row of scalps, and with a ringing war-whoop they left the cabin."

Just as I finished the story nurse came into the room. Sallie roused from her pretended sleep and called out: "Mother read in the Bible about somebody who said: 'I die daily.' Was it your grandmother?"

Sallie must have inherited some of Jerry's wit, only he is good natured and she is always sarcastic. It is generally amusing, though not so much so when she talks about making allowance for her mother's wild imagination. She is an odd specimen. I don't know exactly how to deal with her. Jerry says: "Let her alone, she will come out all right after she has effervesced a little. They tried to bottle you up too tight and the cork flew out."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

She had a bout with the census taker lately. He inquired the names and ages of all the family, how many horses, cows, dogs, cats, finally: "Are there any idiots in the house?" She replied: "Not any, until to-day," closed the door and the conference.

Thine as ever,
Bathsheba.

December 8th, 1860.

Dear Deborah:

Did thee ever notice how difficult it is for an author who attempts to describe Quakers to use our language as we use it? If they merely say: "How does thee do?" or "Where has thee been?" they get it, "How do thee do?" or "Where have thee been?"

They keep the form of the verb belonging to *you*, while we use the form belonging to *he* or *she*. One is as incorrect as the other, but one is our way of talking, the other is not. We have fallen into

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

this error on account of the cumbersome ending *est* of English verbs with thou.

Bayard Taylor is the only author with whom I am acquainted who has mastered our lingo. He was brought up among Friends, and was engaged to marry a member of the Society who "died in her early bloom."

As thee does not see *Harper's Magazine* I will copy for thee a poem of his which appeared there last month. It seems to me absolutely correct in every thought, feeling and expression, as if written by one "to the manner born."

Thy cousin, *Bathsheba*.

THE QUAKER WIDOW.

Thee finds me in the garden, Hannah—come in!

'Tis kind of thee

To wait until the Friends were gone, who came to comfort me.

The still and quiet company a peace may give, indeed.

But blessed is the single heart that comes to us in need.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Come, sit thee down! Here is the bench where
Benjamin would sit
On First-day afternoons in spring, and watch the
swallows flit;
He loved to smell the sprouting box, and hear the
pleasant bees
Go humming round the lilacs and through the
apple trees.

I think he loved the spring; not that he cared for
flowers; most men
Think such things foolishness—but we were first
acquainted then,
One spring; the next he spoke his mind; the third
I was his wife,
And in the spring (it happened so) our children
entered life.

He was but seventy-five; I did not think to lay
him yet
In Kennett grave yard, where at Monthly Meet-
ing first we met.
The Father's mercy shows in this, 'tis better I
should be
Picked out to bear the heavy cross—alone in age
than he.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

We've lived together fifty years; it seems but one
long day,
One quiet Sabbath of the heart, till he was called
away;
And as we bring from Meeting time a sweet re-
membrance home,
So Hannah, I have store of peace for all the days
to come.

I mind, (for I can tell thee now) how hard it was
to know
If I had heard the Spirit right that told me I
should go:
For father had a deep concern upon his mind that
day,
But mother spoke for Benjamin, she knew what
best to say.

Then she was still; they sat awhile; at last she
spoke again,
"The Lord incline thee to the right!" and "Thou
shalt have him, Jane,"
My father said. I cried. Indeed 'twas not the
least of shocks,
For Benjamin was Hicksite and father Ortho-
dox.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I thought of this ten years ago, when daughter
Ruth we lost;
Her husband's of the world and yet I could not see
her crossed.
She wears thee knows the gayest gowns, she hears
a hireling priest,
Ah dear! the cross was ours; her life's a happy one
at least.

Perhaps she'll wear a plainer dress when she's as
old as I—
Would thee believe it, Hannah? once I felt tempta-
tion nigh!
My wedding gown was ashen silk, too simple for
my taste;
I wanted lace around the neck, and a ribbon at the
waist.

How strange it seemed to sit with him upon the
women's side!
I did not dare to lift my eyes: I felt more fear
than pride,
Till "in the presence of the Lord" he said, and
then there came
A holy strength upon my heart, and I could say
the same.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

I used to blush when he came near, but now I
showed no sign;
With all the meeting looking on, I held his hand
in mine.
It seemed my bashfulness was gone, now I was
his for life:
Thee knows the feeling, Hannah, thee too has been
a wife.

As home we rode, I saw no fields look half so green
as ours;
The woods were coming into leaf, the meadows
full of flowers;
The neighbors met us in the lane and every face
was kind,—
'Tis strange how lively everything comes back
upon my mind.

I see as plain as thee sits there, the wedding dinner
spread;
At our own table we were guests, with father at
the head,
And Dinah Passmore helped us both, 'twas she
stood up with me,
And Abner Jones with Benjamin, now they're
gone all three!

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

It is not right to wish for death; the Lord dis-
poses best.
His Spirit comes to quiet hearts, and fits them for
His rest;
And that He halved our little flock was merciful,
I see:
For Benjamin has two in heaven, and two are
left with me.

Eusebius never cared to farm—'twas not his call,
in truth,
And I must rent the dear old place, and go to
daughter Ruth.
Thee'll say her ways are not like mine—young
people nowadays
Have fallen sadly off, I think, from all the good
old ways.

But Ruth is still a Friend at heart; she keeps the
simple tongue,
The cheerful, kindly nature we loved when she
was young;
And it was brought upon my mind, remembering
her, of late,
That we on dress and outward things perhaps lay
too much weight.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

I once heard Jesse Kersey say, a spirit clothed with
 grace,
And pure, almost, as angels are, may have a
 homely face.
And dress may be of less account: the Lord will
 look within:
The soul it is that testifies of righteousness or sin.

Thee mustn't be too hard on Ruth; she's anxious
 I should go,
And she will do her duty as a daughter should,
 I know.
'Tis hard to change so late in life, but we must be
 resigned:
The Lord looks down contentedly upon a willing
 mind.

Good-bye, from
 Bashy.

[Note by the Editor: This poem is printed by
permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.]

April 3d, 1861.

Dear Deborah:

Our beloved brother Charley is at
home once more. There is no fear that
he will run away to sea again, for though

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

he returns first mate of his ship with the offer from her owners to be captain next voyage, a conflict with a whale has deprived him of his good right arm, putting an end to his hopes of an active life. However nothing vitiates his verve and vigor, his vivacity and vitality. He says: "Why should I *blubber*? Didn't the whale which nearly took me to the bottom of the ocean blubber enough for us both? I should think so. Twenty casks of good oil after it was tried out. I could never equal that, if I was *tried* ever so much. Besides, I have no time for lamentation. This education I am giving my left hand in writing and in doing a thousand other useful things takes all the time the twins have to spare from my yarns when like the whale I rise to blow."

Truly Charley is a perfect godsend to Mollie and Sallie, for he tells them endless sea stories. The most popular of these yarns is: "Uncle Charley's Race

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

with the Whale.” The piece has already had a run of fifty nights. It is this: One day the sailor on the watch for whales cried out: “There she blows!” Then all was excitement, the whaleboat was lowered and the men rowed after the whale. When they were very near Charley threw the harpoon with all his strength, saw that it was firmly lodged in the whale’s head, and began paying out the coil of rope in the bottom of the boat to give the whale his last run before he died. One end of the rope was tied to the harpoon, the other was wound around the loggerhead of the boat. By some means Charley was caught by the rope and hurled into the water. He managed to get a knife out of his pocket, open it with his teeth and cut the rope. Then alas! he found he had cut it between himself and the boat, and was still fast to the whale, being whirled over in the ocean at the rate of twenty knots an hour. In the midst of

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

the hurly burly he never lost courage, but cut again, that time freeing himself from the terrible monster. He was picked up by the boat's crew, more dead than alive. His arm was so lacerated by the rope that later it was cut off to save his life.

The twins wished to realize this drama more vividly by casting Sallie for the part of the whale, a long handled shovel for the harpoon, and a clothes line for the rope, but when Charley was called upon to throw the harpoon, to roll over and over on the parlor carpet as he did in the ocean, to open the knife with his teeth, and cut first one end of the rope and then the other, one end being attached to the piano leg and the other to Sallie's head, he said: "I am ready for almost anything that happens along, but this is a rather stiff proposition. I must *draw the line* at the clothes line, for my mother's son is not the *sun* to *cross the line* at the wrong season of the year, besides I do

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

not think your mother would like to have her clothes line cut to pieces, and she *might* object to having Sallie harpooned with a heavy iron shovel. Moreover I have only one arm and hand now, whereas then I had two, and I never heard of a captain sending a man who had lost his right arm to harpoon a whale." The play was indefinitely postponed, and the ticket money returned to the spectators.

The girls are wonderfully interested in Uncle Charley's efforts to write with his left hand. They are trying the same manœuvre themselves. I consider it very desirable to be ambidextrous, and give prizes every day for their encouragement. I have written a Valentine on the subject which I will copy here. At first Mollie did not understand it, but my little Paddy said: "Mamma means my two little paddies."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

A VALENTINE FOR THE TWINS, ABOUT TWINS

A few years ago there came into the world a lovely pair of twins. They would have been precisely alike only for one odd circumstance. They could not wear each other's clothes, for if they tried to do so the clothes on one twin would be hind side before, but that was no reason why they should not grow up to do a great deal of good in the world, only Mrs. Fashion had decided that one of them should be strong, skillful and industrious, the other weak, ignorant and idle. To be sure they are always washed at the same time, and care is taken to dress them alike, and they go everywhere together, but beyond that, their treatment is entirely different. When they were very small and first began to grasp play-things, the gay colored ball, the bright rattle were always given to the lucky twin, and if the unlucky one tried to seize anything, it was taken away and given to the other. Soon the favorite was taught to write and draw, but if the other so much as touched pen or pencil there was a terrible fuss, and if the offence was repeated the poor thing was tied up for punishment. The only privilege ever granted, is being allowed to wear some of the ornaments which might be in the way of the active one, and the doubtful priv-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

ilege of wearing the wedding-ring. The unlucky twin can not set a stitch nor write a letter, but is dependent on the lucky one for aid at all times. As they grow older, one will grow stronger and stronger, the other weaker and weaker, unless you go to your mother and say: "Dear mamma, please do not listen any longer to Mrs. Fashion, but help me to teach these little twins of mine so that I may have two right hands, and pray don't let my poor little *left* hand get *so badly left*."

Charley has used his left hand to such good purpose that he has written a short lecture called: "Whales and Whalemen," on his favorite mammalian fish, so last week I invited all the villagers to come and hear it. Thee may be sure they never refuse an invitation to the great house but always turn out in full force. The linen coverings were laid over the parlor carpets, the audience chairs brought down from the garret, the chandeliers were ablaze with spermaceti candles in honor of the whales, and the people were punctually in their places, (for I

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

have taken pains to educate them in the "on time habit,") only pausing on their way to their seats to examine the pictures. Thetis was much admired and spoken of as "a beautiful Scripture piece." Pausing before "The Last Supper," an old lady remarked: "Having a picnic I suppose, but what for do they all set on one side of the table?" One of the pictures is entitled "The *Doge's* Palace." Aunt Lorany exclaimed: "Oh for all the world what a nice place for the little *doggies*." I thought if I explained matters she would be more than ever bewildered by the boat that was half man and half ox and by the ring that was thrown into the sea.

Everything was in readiness, but no lecturer appeared; Sallie was sent to his room. She speedily dragged him forth, though he was in a blue funk, led him to his desk in the parlor, curtsied to the audience and remarked: "He is afraid of you, but I am not, though I am

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

only a little girl, and he is a big man and has killed *mama lyin* fish as big as this room."

This introduction brought down the house, and set the lecturer on his feet. He began with good cheer and cheers, thanks to Sallie.

WHALES AND WHALEMEN

"In olden time whales were classed as fish, but a whale is not half so much a fish as he is an animal. For one thing he can only breathe for a short time under water. He has a hole in the top of his head, and every now and then comes to the surface to get a mouthful of fresh air. He spouts a column of exhausted air charged with watery vapor, which being condensed in the cold atmosphere may be visible to a sailor on the lookout for whales, as he is perched in the so-called crow's nest, otherwise a barrel lashed to the top of the ship's tallest mast. As soon as the sailor catches sight of a whale he cries out in excited tones: 'There she blows!' Then the boats are hastily lowered and the sailors row joyfully in pursuit of the whale. When they get quite near, the mate makes a strong thrust with

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

his harpoon. The best place to strike is near the ear or eye. A very long rope is fastened at one end to the harpoon and at the other is wound around the loggerhead of the boat, so that the men can have a hold on the whale after he is struck, for in his fright and pain he dives to a great depth or runs a long distance carrying the boat at terrific speed before he dies. Sometimes he fights so hard the sailors are forced to cut the rope and let him go. In that case if another ship of the fleet strikes that whale he belongs to the one who lodged the first harpoon in him. Of course the rope must be very carefully coiled in the bottom of the boat so as to pay out smoothly else the boat will be overturned and perhaps the sailors will be drowned.

“The whale is filled with fat, or blubber as the whalemén call it, consequently when he is dead he does not sink, but floats on the top of the water, which is pretty lucky for the sailors. Of course he is too large to be taken on board the ship, so he is towed alongside, fastened there and the blubber is cut up into pieces weighing about a ton, which are afterwards minced into smaller pieces, called horse pieces, and then the boiling in the great iron try-pots is begun. Water is poured over the deck to keep the ship from taking fire, and it is kept wet during the whole time

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

of boiling. The casks are cleaned and lashed to the rail to hold them in their places. The sailors take turns in boiling, one company or 'watch' boils perhaps six hours, then others take their places. When it is ready the oil is poured in the casks and left to cool before it is stored away in the hold.

"Two thousand barrels of oil is a good voyage. People generally do not enjoy being greasy, but the whalemén dote on a greasy voyage. In fact unlike housekeepers on land, no greater mortification can befall them than to be reported '*clean*' in the newspapers at home, for they all have a certain share in the profits of the voyage. The captain's 'lay' is the largest, but every seaman has his proportion, thus rendering each man anxious to catch all the whales possible. Some vessels have brought home catches worth a hundred thousand dollars.

"To give an idea of the size of a whale, it may be said, the blubber, which serves instead of hair, feathers, wool or fur to keep the animal warm, would carpet a room sixty-six feet long by twenty-seven feet wide all over eighteen inches thick. The jaw is often twenty feet long, with a spread of nine feet. The heart is about as large as a hogshead; as for the blood, a physician's clinical thermometer would register 104 degrees as

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

his normal temperature, a fever heat which would kill a man if long continued. This shows how far the whale is from being a cold-blooded fish. The eye is not much larger than the eye of a cow, the ear scarcely large enough to admit a knitting needle. The sperm whale has monstrous ivory teeth nearly a foot long in his lower jaw; he has no teeth in the upper jaw, only sockets for the lower teeth."

Here I interrupted the lecturer to inquire how the whale felt when he had the toothache, whether he took laughing gas when he had a tooth extracted, who was his dentist, and would making a false set be profitable? My frivolity was rebuked, and we were further informed that,

"The right whale has no teeth at all, but his upper jaw is lined with slabs of bone from four to twelve feet in length, fringed at the edges, this fringe forming a sieve through which the whale strains the water and retains the 'squid' or small fish which form his diet, and which he catches by merely opening his mouth."

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

(I was on the point of expressing a wish that we might obtain our food in like manner, but refrained.)

"The head of the sperm whale is enormous, one-third of his whole length. The upper part above the skull is filled with oil and spermaceti.

"In the early days of our settlements, dead whales sometimes floated on shore, or live ones were blown in a storm far up the beach. These were treasure trove. The Montauk Indians offered the fins and tail to the Great Spirit as the most acceptable sacrifice.

"The first whaling voyages were short. In a few weeks the vessels came home laden with blubber to be tried out on shore. It was drawn by oxen to the try-house where the oil was boiled, and a most odoriferous operation it was! The whole town held its nose for a week.

"The right whale was the only kind caught by the first adventurers. The sperm whale was not found until they sailed further south. After a while the right whales grew shy and were only found in the frozen oceans of the north or south. The voyages were very long, as much as three or four years, for the ships often sailed around Cape Horn to get into the Pacific Ocean and thence to the "North West." As the whales

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

were scarce the ships were often obliged to cruise a long time on the whaling ground waiting for a sight of them.

“The whaling business, at least in this part of the world, began on Nantucket, most of the ship owners and captains were Quakers, as were two-thirds of the inhabitants of the Island. The business was exceedingly profitable and Nantucket became a very wealthy and prosperous place, but the main land had many advantages, and the shipping was gradually transferred to New Bedford, leaving Nantucket out in the cold. In a few years New Bedford was the most important whaling port in the world. It had a serious setback in 1812 during the second war with England, when for fear of capture all ships were forbidden by Congress to leave port. The law was called the Embargo Act, spelt backward by the sailors it was the ‘O grab me’ Act. After the war the course was steadily onward and upward from greater to greater prosperity until the climax was reached in 1852 when 278 whale-ships sailed within twelve months. Whaling throughout the United States was at its height in 1838. There were then 700 ships in the country worth \$20,000,000. There has been a steady decline since the discovery of petroleum, and especially since gas came into use.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

"The danger in catching whales is great. Sometimes the boats are broken in pieces and the men are drowned or are killed by the infuriated animal after the harpoon has pierced his thick side. Even large ships have been wrecked by the attack of a wounded whale, as notably the *Ann Alexander* of New Bedford.

"The London *Punch* has made merry over the 'fish story' of the demolition of this ship, but Mr. Punch's version of the affair, which I copy, is literally true. The vessel left her bones on the Island of Juan Fernandez.

.

THE WONDERFUL WHALERS.

Fathers of the oratory,
List to my surprising tale,
Harken to a wondrous story
More than 'very like a whale;'
Each mesmeric marvel-monger,
Lend to me your ears likewise;
If for miracles you hunger
You shall ope both mouth and eyes.

In the ship *Ann Alexander*
Cruising in pursuit of whales,
Bold John S. Deblois commander,
With a crew so gallant sails,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

In the South Pacific Ocean,
Reaching to the Off Shore Ground
'Mong the waves in wild commotion
Several monstrous whales they found.

These two boats did follow after,
Larboard boat, and starboard too,
And with shouts of glee and laughter,
The leviathans pursue;
When the larboard boat commanded
By the stout first mate did soon
In a whale, with force strong handed,
Deeply plunge a sharp harpoon.

Off the mighty monster started,
Pain and anguish gave him cause,
Suddenly he backward darted,
Seized the boat between his jaws;
Into smithereens he cracked it,
Or, as witnesses declare,
Who beheld the thing transacted,
Bits no bigger than a chair.

In the starboard boat, the captain
Quickly to the rescue struck,
And although the boat was snapt in
Pieces, saved the crew—by luck.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Now the good *Ann Alexander*
To their aid the waist boat sent;
Half the band then having manned her,
At the whale again they went.

Soon the Ocean giant nearing,
They prepared to give him fight,
Little thinking, never fearing,
That the beast again would bite.
But without their host they reckoned,
At their boat he also flew;
Like the first he served the second,
Snapped it into pieces too.

Sure his jaws, together clapping,
Had the gallant seamen crushed,
But when they perceived him snapping,
Straight into the sea they rushed.
To afford the help they needed,
Bold Deblois repaired again:
Once more also he succeeded
In the aim to save his men.

Tired perhaps of sport renewing,
To their ship this time they hied,
When behold! the whale pursuing,
With his jaws extended wide.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Gloating with revenge, he sought 'em,
But with blubber pierced and gored,
He was crippled, or had caught 'em,
But they all got safe on board.

Risk the heroes little cared for,
Speedily they set their sail
In the ship herself—prepared for
One more tussle with the whale.
Now they reached—plunged a lance in
The infuriate monster's head;
Then—of course they had no chance in
Close encounter—onward sped.

For the ship they saw him making,
But the chase he soon gave o'er,
Which the animal forsaking
Down on him again they bore;
Fifty rods below the water,
There they saw the monster lie,
So despairing him to slaughter,
They resolved no more to try.

At this time Deblois was standing
Sternly on the larboard bow,
Ready with harpoon his hand in,
To inflict a deadly blow:

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Up he saw the monster rising,
With velocity and power,
At the rate of speed surprising
Of full fifteen knots an hour.

In an instant,—Heaven defend us!
Lo, the whale had, near the keel
Struck with such a force tremendous,
That it made the vessel reel,
And her bottom knocked a hole in,
Into which the water poured,
And the sea so fierce did roll in,
That the billows rushed and roared!

Yet the ship was saved from sinking,
Though so riddled by the whale
And Deblois and his unshrinking
Crew survive to tell the tale.
Strong are those daring fellows,
Doubtless the harpoon to throw;
And—to judge from what they tell us—
Stronger still to draw the bow.

The lecture was greatly applauded,
and among the small boys shouts for
Sallie were heard; she came forward
very composedly and said: “I am glad

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

you like Uncle Charley. He is a bully boy."

I am proud of Charley and of Sallie too. Who knows, perhaps he may become "the celebrated one-armed lecturer." He says: "In that case Sallie will have to go along to introduce me."

That nice girl Jane Tompkins looked at Charley with tears in her eyes; perhaps her tears will produce as good an effect as mine did, on a time we wot of. I hope so, for I should love to see the dear boy happily married. It would be fun to have another pair of turtle doves besides Mamie Dove and Jerry Junior.

Mrs. Tompkins has invited Charley to repeat his lecture at her house next week. That looks like encouragement. Perhaps she has her eye on a share in the distribution of Uncle Jim's millions. Jerry says: "If she doesn't look sharp there will not be any millions left to distribute." I shall act on that hint to-morrow morning, and settle a sufficiency, (in real

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

estate, for that can't fly away) on each member of the family. I never meant that my children should be rich; I want them to have a competence, but not wealth.

The bulk of the property after my death, (if I don't spend it all before I die, as Jerry hinted) is to be a fund for the assistance of persons born to wealth but reduced to comparative poverty. Jerry proposes to name it: "A Charity for the Relief of the *Has Beens*. No *Never Wasers* need apply." Isn't Jerry comical? I wish I had kept a book for his bright sayings, as I have for the children. Recollect when he was a little boy and was found storing a load of wood in the cellar. He was remonstrated with and told the work was too heavy for him, but replied: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Jerry used to enjoy practical jokes, but has given them up since his grand fiasco of *artificial sneezing* in a silent

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Quaker Meeting. Even mother allowed Jerry was to blame that day.

I think one of the best things he ever said, was in describing his rapid courtship: "I made up my mind it would take a long pull and a strong pull and a pull all *together*:—only I divided it *to get her*.

Thine as ever,
Bathsheba.

P. S. To-day Jerry began a speech on this wise: "I have a great mind." Then a recollection flashed into the vacuum I call *my* mind, of an index in a book I once saw, which read: "Mr. Justice Best—his great mind." Never having heard of the gentleman, nor of his unusual supply of intellect, I turned up the reference and found this paragraph: "Mr. Justice Best said he had a great mind to commit the witness for contempt of court." Query, is Jerry's great mind in the same category?

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

When we were abroad we met some people who were doing Europe on a dollar a day. Jerry turned pale and said: "Great Scott!" his only swear word. However that was nothing to two girls we met afterwards who were living luxuriously on what they called "half a pound" a week. Jerry says: Marriage is a *civil* contract and that means we are always to be *civil* to each other. I guess so, as much as that.

P. P. S. Don't tell anyone, for if it should get around to the Overseers of the Meeting they would make Charley no end of trouble, but he tells us that it is impossible to get the work done on board a whale ship without swearing at the sailors, and as it is the mate's place to get the work done, his captain used to say: "Charley, just thee step on deck will thee and use some of thy unadvised language to the blasphemers." He says this captain would never ship what he

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

called "a tongue tied mate." If the swearing was a sin, I think the captain is the responsible person. Doesn't thee? Charley is the nicest fellow, we never hear an oath, or anything approaching to it, from his lips. I am glad he did not form the habit. Dear boy, he ought to let me divide my property with him, but he will not hear of it.

B.

October 9th, 1861.

Dear Deborah:

Charley is so grateful for the care and attention we bestow on him that whenever he goes to the city he brings home some little gift for me or the children. These offerings of affection are apt to be more acceptable to the children than to their mother.

At one time I strive to smile amiably over a pair of Cinderella slippers, though not being one of the jealous sisters I do not wish to cut off either my heel or my

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

toe for the sake of wearing them, while on another occasion I struggle to feel duly grateful for a bonnet which does injustice to my complexion, and is in the style of the year before last.

His latest purchase was two pairs of nice thick, soft, warm, ribbed worsted hose, with feet twelve inches in length. It is harder to submit to a gift of twelve inch stockings than No. 1 shoes. My patience being exhausted, I asked if he could not change them for something smaller and thinner. He was surprised, but willing to do anything. Next morning, after breakfast, I said to Mollie: "Go to my dressing bureau and in the left hand corner of the next to the top drawer you will find two pairs of stockings, wrap them up and give them to your uncle." The good little maiden executed her errand with neatness and despatch, and Uncle Charley departed. After he had been gone an hour or two I happened to open that bureau drawer.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

There, before my astonished eyes, lay the identical twelve-inch ribbed woolen stockings. "Mollie!" I exclaimed, "What upon earth did you give your uncle?" "Why, two pairs of your stockings as you told me." To be sure the lovely child had supplied my fastidious brother with two pairs of old, faded, lisle thread stockings. I was aghast at the idea of Charley's unfolding those darned old—I should say old darned stockings, in Alexander Stewart's great emporium of fashion and expressing a wish to exchange them for others that would please his sister better.

When Charley came home he said: "There's the bundle again. I forgot all about it." Notwithstanding Charley's reputation for truthfulness I have a shrewd suspicion that if I should interview the clerks in the hosiery department at Broadway and Eighth Street I might hear a different story.

Last evening we had a meeting of the

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Young People's Club. A feature of the entertainment was a prize for the best composition where all the words should begin with the same letter. Notice of this contest had been given at the last meeting of the Club, so that there should be plenty of time for preparation, as it is not an easy thing to do. Charley wisely selected T and won the prize. I wondered how the name of Tompkins happened to occur to him.

TOM TOMPKINS' TRIAL TRIP

Tom Tompkins thought the trip to town, the tryst to Theresa, the tender Thanksgiving turkey truly tempting.

Tossed the tight, tweed trousers towards the trunk. The tame, tawny, tan terrier's teeth tumultuously tackled these treasured teguments, tore them to tatters.

Thomas threatened Teeny: "Tis too true, Teeny, that thy temperamental temerity tends to terrible tricks. Thou tormenting tyke! Twist these tethered thongs to thyself."

Then Thomas' tailor took thimble, thread, tape,

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

to tack the trousers together, tapering the thighs to the toes.

This thing tantalized Tom. The tabulated timetable told them the through trains transferred to Tarrytown. They telegraphed three times that the train tarry there temporarily till Tom's tardy transportation thither to-morrow, transferable ticket. The trainman tooted tauntingly.

Tears, tribulation! Tom talked this tedious tirade ten thousand times, tongue tired, thirsty, though Temperance teetotaler tapped the tank to the tavern, tempted to try tobacco to tranquilize temper.

Thus tersely this true tale takes the tall, talented Thomas to the table to taste tepid tea, thick toast, thin terrapin, tough truffles.

Tête à tête, Tracy Tupman tenders the *Tribune*. "Terrible tragedy! Terrific tornadoes, torrents, tempests, thermometer thirteen. Two trains telescoped to Tarrytown terminus!"

Tommy, tongue-tied, trembles, thrills, throbs. Takes Teeny, the tame, tawny, tan terrier thankfully to thorax. Tableau.

We also tried who could make the *worst* conundrum. Jerry won. He asked what town in western New York has

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

the same name as the Holy Land. The answer was Canandaigua. You must call the *Canan Caanan* and throw the *daigua* away. The judges awarded him the prize, but I told him he might as well try to palm off the multiplication table as new and original. At last he owned he did see it in some newspaper when he was a boy. We took his prize away from him and gave it to a small boy whose conundrum seemed to have at least the merit of originality.

I proposed a Missing Word Contest in a quotation from Hawthorne, namely:

“It was a dim old fashioned chamber festooned with ——”

These were the answers I received, not one of which was correct. Silk, satin, velvet, lace, brocade, chintz, scrim, calico, netting, tapestry, curtains, draperies, hangings, fishnets, flowers, roses, moss, mistletoe, holly, ground pine, vines.

I leave this sphinx riddle to thy well

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

known sagacity. Try this sort of game on thy listless pupils some hot afternoon. It always rouses flagging attention.

Speaking of flags and flagging, have I ever told thee of the "Flag Matinée" which was part of our course of instructive and amusing entertainments last winter?

The parlors were decorated with the flags of all nations. Having written quite a learned disquisition on their origin and history I was not best pleased to be interrupted in my reading thereof, by a great shout of laughter from the assembled guests. I looked around to ascertain the cause of the outbreak, and behold a new flag had made its appearance, "A banner with the strange device:

"Don't let your attention flag!"

It was Jerry's own self parading through the rooms holding his flag aloft in one hand, while in the other he held a dish

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

of flag root which he was dispensing among the guests in lieu of the customary ice cream.

I exclaimed: "Oh, Jerry! how can you be so absurd?" He dipped his flag in salute and stood at attention. Then putting down the dish, he stroked his moustache in gleesome glee and made reply: "Can't help it ma'am; born so, a Hedonist by nature. Only trying to keep the children quiet, and persuading them to listen to the words of wisdom as they fall from the lips of the cultured chairwoman. (I hope I did not make a mistake and say charwoman?)"

If I ever could be angry with Jerry that was the time for it, but somehow he was so ridiculous and innocent and good humored that I was obliged to laugh with the rest, and soon resumed my reading at the White Elephant flag of Siam, remarking in parenthesis that the Siamese are not the only ones who have a white elephant on their hands.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

"That is so," said Charley, "and both specimens are worshipped."

What a boy that Charley is! At this present juncture I have stopped writing because I overheard him chaffing Jerry outside my open window. How true it is that listeners never hear any good of themselves. This is what he was saying: "If you should fall in a rainwater butt now you would not come up holding Bashy's bonnet string, you would bob up serenely, tied to her apron string."

Trust that blessed old Jerry for not getting angry on his own account and for coming to his wife's rescue. He laughed amiably and said: "Oh shucks! let Bashy alone; she is all right, pursuing the even tenor of her way, or perhaps as she is a woman it would be more appropriate to say, the even soprano of her way." Then they walked away together, as good friends as if I had never an apron string to my name. Charley is the sauciest fellow alive, but no one gets pro-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

voked with him. I imagine because we are all so sorry for him as we look at that empty sleeve. Disabled for life, and not yet thirty-six years old. I am not surprised Miss Tompkins wept. I must tell thee another of Jerry's speeches. One day Charley remarked, "You can always tell an army officer." Jerry replied, "But you can't tell him much."

I will copy a part of my interrupted discourse for thy benefit. It is called:

A SLIGHT SKETCH CONCERNING THE ORIGIN
AND HISTORY OF FLAGS

The German flag originated when the Emperor Barbarossa was crowned in Frankfort cathedral. The path from the palace to the cathedral was covered with a carpet of which the colors were black, red and white. After the coronation the carpet was given to the people and everyone tried to cut off a piece to carry about the city as a flag. These colors were recognized as national about 1200. They have been interpreted to mean: "From darkness, through blood, to light."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

The tricolor of France is the union of the red oriflamme of St. Denis, the blue banner of St. Martin, and the white banner of the Virgin Mary. It was said that infidels were struck blind by merely looking at the oriflamme. When this standard was displayed no quarter was given. It was carried at the battle of Agincourt for the last time. Joan of Arc said: "I have not reared the oriflamme of death. To me it behooves to spare the fallen foe." St. Martin gave his blue cape on the field of battle and for a long time it was used as the royal standard. The white banner of the Virgin Mary was adopted by the Bourbon kings. At the revolution it was changed to the tricolor. Napoleon added the golden eagle at the top of the staff.

The tricolor of Italy was devised by Napoleon, being green, white, and red, while that of France is blue, white and red.

The Royal British standard contains in the first and fourth quarters the three leoparded lions of England. In the second quarter the lion rampant of Scotland, and in the third quarter the harp of Ireland. The British Union Jack is a combination of St. George's Cross for England, St. Andrew's for Scotland, and St. Patrick's for Ireland.

The Royal Spanish standard contains the cas-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

tles and lions of Spain, also the crimson bars of Aragon drawn by a king's fingers in blood down the shield of the noble Count of Barcelona, mortally wounded fighting against the Normans.

The shields of the five Moorish kings overthrown in Portugal by King Alfonso are blazoned on the flag of Portugal.

The double-headed Austrian eagle claims to be the lawful successor of that of Ancient Rome, where the two heads symbolized the Eastern and Western empires at Rome and Constantinople.

The Russian two-headed eagle, like the Austrian, claims to be the true descendant of the Roman. He holds in his left claw a chart of the Caspian Sea, in his right, one of the Black Sea. In his left beak one of the White Sea, and in his right one of the Baltic Sea.

The flag of Sweden is blue with a yellow cross. That of Norway is red with a blue cross.

The flag of Brazil is "the armillary sphere" of Portugal showing the conquests of that maritime nation. First a star for Portugal. Then stars all around the coast of Africa, and on the east coast of South America, including Brazil.

The dragon on the Chinese flag is the emblem of China and of the Emperor. The dragon reserved for imperial use has five claws; that used for the common people has four. Its scales

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

number eighty-one, because nine times nine is the extreme odd or lucky number. This flag was originally triangular.

The Japanese say: "Japan is the land of the sun, the true home of that luminary." Therefore their flag bears a red globe in the center to represent the sun.

The proudest title of the Kings of Siam is King of the White Elephant, hence the elephant on the Siamese flag. When the king wishes to ruin a subject he makes him a present of a white elephant, because the sacred animal is worshipped and must be cared for in a very expensive way.

The flag of the "Prophet" was the green curtain which hung before the tent door of one of his wives. It is now called the Celestial Standard, and is said to have been presented to Mahomet by the Angel Gabriel. It is twelve feet in height and the golden hand which surmounts the pole holds a copy of the Koran. It is preserved most carefully in several cases, and Emirs watch over it constantly.

The flag of the United States passed through various changes before assuming its present form. A favorite device for a flag during the Revolution was a rattlesnake coiled ready to strike, with the motto: "Don't tread on me," or a rattle-

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

snake cut in thirteen pieces and the motto: "Join or die." A pine tree was placed on an American flag so long ago as the reign of Charles Second. The King was displeased by the use of this flag, but when told by a friend of the colonies that it was intended to represent the royal oak at Boscobel, which had saved his majesty's life after the battle of Worcester, he recovered his wonted good humor, saying: "They are a parcel of honest dogs." Governor Endicott of Massachusetts cut out the cross from the British flag to show his disapproval of popery. The first maker and partial designer of the stars and stripes was Mrs. John Ross of Philadelphia. She was assisted by Washington, and our flag is said to bear a resemblance to his family coat of arms. At first the thirteen stars were arranged in a circle, afterwards when there were more of them, in the form of a star. Now generally in rows.

"And the star spangled banner, Oh! long may it
wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the
brave!"

Thine ever,
Bathsheba.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

October 17th, 1861.

Dear Cousin:

I have seen somewhere in advice to mothers, that children should be encouraged to write letters. This advice is superfluous where Sallie is concerned. She is a chip of the old block, but carries letter writing a step further than I have ever done. Behold a letter written to herself. Sometimes she surprises me, this Sallie.

Dear Sallie:

Don't be jealous of your twin sister. Remember, if she is the better looker, you have the brains of the family, and brains count after looks are done with. Mother has not gone off much yet, but nurse, who is the same age, looks as old as Methuselah. Maybe Mollie will. At any rate she can never catch up with you in sconce. If Mollie *had a mind* she might be a poetess. At any rate she can write, (after a fashion) so she don't have to *make her mark*.

Yours truly,

Sallie.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

I suppose I shall have to pardon Sallie's envy of her sister in consideration of her compliment to me. Sometimes I think she is embittered because the girls at school tell her she looks like a servant girl her mother used to know. Sallie has a talent for discovering the weak spots in every one's armor. She very early found out that her grandmother although not absurdly old dislikes to tell her age, consequently her inquiries were frequent and she held many personal interviews. Finally mother gratified her with this information: "I am supposed to have been born about the middle of the Babylonish captivity." By way of further elucidation her helpful father, always anxious for his children's progress in original research, advised her to look up the fossils of the Pliocene Period and if that would not do, try the Miocene.

My unique offspring has a train of pensioners, hangers on and ne'er do weels, who absorb the greater part of her pocket

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

money. Among them Jimmie holds first place. The other day he engaged to weed her garden and came bright and early in the morning. Sallie left her own breakfast to superintend his. He had the best the house affords and enjoyed a sumptuous repast. Then Sallie said mischievously: "Jimmie, you have had a good breakfast, suppose you eat your dinner now."

"Yes, Jimmie eats his dinner."

Forthwith a fresh supply of edibles disappeared. Sallie held her breath in astonishment, but was able to say, at the close of the second plenteous meal: "Suppose you eat your supper now."

"Yes, Jimmie eats his supper."

When the third offering of dainties had vanished, Sallie just managed to articulate:

"Now Jimmie, you are ready for work."

"Jimmie never works after supper," was the calm reply and Sallie gave up the struggle leaving Jimmie in possession

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

of the battlefield and the honors of victory, where the slaughtered were all cleverly buried out of sight, no signs of the conflict left, except a polished plate with a knife and fork crossed at right angles, weapons which had done greater execution than King Arthur's two swords excalibur and proved his right to a seat at "The Round Table." Jimmie retired on his laurels with the sweet consciousness that he was the *ultima Thule* towards which creation had labored. On Sallie's return to her neglected breakfast I inquired if she and Jimmie had discussed the nebular theory of the formation of worlds by cosmic dust whirling in space. She replied: "Jimmie has *discussed* nothing but three meals one atop of the other." That's all there is of the story.

One of Sallie's protégés is silly on the subject of twins, and says to every individual man, woman and child she meets on the street: "You are just as pretty

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

as a pink, you look just like twins." Sallie declares if Martha knew how unpleasant it is not to have any identity or individuality of your own, to be merely half of one, or one of two, she would not be so lavish in distributing her smiling compliments. Perhaps there is not much to choose between Bashy and Martha in the matter of twins, both being obviously monomaniacs.

This daughterling of mine is developing a sarcastic quality which is rather alarming. This morning I found on my pillow a caricature of myself perched on a great pile of dictionaries, intent on a huge encyclopedia, the floor thickly strewn with reference books, closed or open in most admired disorder, and underneath the highly colored painting were these descriptive lines:

From far and from wide
People flock to her side;
So learned is she, and so wise.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

All night and all day,
So the neighbors do say,
To answer their questions she tries.

What is to be done when one's very infants hold one up to ridicule? In this instance I know what to do. To-morrow morning Sallie will find on her pillow a few extracts from former compositions of her own. For example:

"Alexander the Great was born at the age of twenty-six."

"Abraham the father of the Jews was an Egyptian king who shaved his eye brows when his cat died."

"On this account Coriolanus went to Egypt and embalmed his own head, depositing it in the largest pyramid at Gizah."

"George Washington was the beau idol of goodness, he could not tell a lie after he had cut down cherry trees, he fought and bled for his country a good lot. Rest noble sole in thy everlasting piece."

"The chief thing in a feudal castle was the mote."

"The life of a page was truly a hard one, he

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

rose just before six o'clock and had to, four times a day."

"Pompey was a Spartacus, and was made regent of Spain. He also fought a duel with Julia Caesar."

Etc., etc.,—for I have no end of these elegant extracts laid up in lavender.

In justice to Sallie I must state that these were the efforts of her immature genius. Her latest school composition does me proud. It is a sketch of our Presidents' wives. I will copy her description of thy favorite Dolly Madison, for I think she must have imbibed some of her enthusiasm from thee. She wrote:

"Perhaps of all the personages who have occupied the White House, she who best comprehended the lofty yet lowly position of the ruler of a great nation and at the same time a servant of the people, was the beautiful Quakeress Dolly Madison. She ruled as a queen by her gaiety, gentleness and goodness. Glad to hold so honored a place, but equally ready to resign it to

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

her successor, brave when the beautiful white palace was burned over her head by the British soldiers, she thought not of saving her own possessions, but the archives of the nation. Always beloved, she was the only woman who was ever invited by Congress to leave the gallery to occupy a seat on the floor of the House. This honor was always accorded to her to extreme old age, long after the death of her husband, and her name still lends a lustre to Washington Society."

To-day Mollie rushed into my room after school and flung herself sobbing on my neck. "Oh mamma, what shall we do? Sallie has been impertinent to Teacher. He said so before the whole school and Sallie does not seem to care a rush, for she walked home as proud as a peacock, just as if she had done something smart."

Sallie appeared at the door and I mildly inquired: "Sallie, what does this mean?" After the affair was explained to her, she said: "This *crysis* is quite unnecessary. I asked the teacher what

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Shakespeare meant when he wrote 'Good wine needs no bush' and he remarked it was a pertinent question and I advise Mollie to look up pertinent and impertinent in the dictionary before she bedews your collar with any more tears on my account." Poor little Mollie was quite crushed, but the panacea for her woes was found in story telling as usual. After I had related a number of cherished time worn incidents I said: "Now, tell *me* a story, a brand, fire new one, I don't want any old chestnut."

I will tell you what papa told Jerry this morning when Jerry declared he was going to lick a fellow at school. Father began: "I read some good advice on that subject in a magazine not long ago," but Jerry said: "Please do not preach, I remember your jokes but I forget your sermons!"

"Well this will pass for a joke. The paper said: 'Dread R. E. Morse, decline his acquaintance, refuse to be introduced to him.' Can you remember that?"

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

“For fear I might forget it I will print it in white paint inside my umbrella. ‘Dread R. E. Morse’ then it will serve for advice to the umbrella thief, instead of shaming him with ‘Stolen from Lawyer Dearborne.’” But papa said: “It does not apply. Nobody yet ever felt any compunctions of conscience about appropriating an umbrella.”

Thy cousin
Bathsheba.

November 1st, 1861.

Oh dear, Deborah! my heart quakes at the very thought of this terrible war! How can it be necessary that we should kill our brothers? When I talk that way Charley says: “Bashy, don’t be a copperhead.”

I have tried not to distress thee with my fears, but I can keep my heartbreak to myself no longer, I know thy sympathy will not fail me in this time of need.

Of course the war fills all our minds.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

I am selfish enough to rejoice that they do not want any one-armed soldiers so Charley is safe. Let him chafe as he will, *he* must stay with me.

Jerry Junior is too young to enlist. I tell him they are not so unreasonable as to expect babes in arms to carry arms, but he says he will grow up before the war is ended. I am not afraid of that for surely it cannot last much longer. Six months already and we were so sure it would end in three!

But Jerry! oh I fear! I fear! He does not say much, but he has taken out his old uniform and hung it in his wardrobe and his cap hangs in the hall. I shudder to see it. I know where his heart is and where he would be were it not for me and the children. Thee knows I was never over angelic, still dare I hold him if his country needs him? I must not be a mill stone hanging around his neck. He came safely through the Mexican War, he might through this, and he

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

might not. The tears are pouring from my eyes and I must stop.

Jerry has come to comfort me. He says he is not wanted yet, there are younger men to answer the present call, I am thankful for the reprieve.

Goodbye from poor terror stricken

Bathsheba.

P. S. Sallie has discovered that the name of our new President includes that of our new Vice President: thus,

Abra(ham Lin)coln.

Just here Mollie comes tripping in, saying: "Something to put in your letter, mamma. Write: 'I see C. H. around our board.' Tell her to guess what it spells. C. H. means Uncle Charley." Then she whispers very softly in my ear, for fear thee might hear it fifty miles away, "It spells, our dear cousin Deborah."

B.

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

October 26th, 1861.

Dear Deborah:

Joy of joys! Jerry my first born, my only son, is home again from his first cruise in the training-ship, the same dear, loving boy, only so grown, so improved, so strong and well. I am perfectly happy. The dear child must have spent all his pocket money in presents for us, a magnificent diamond ring for me, beautiful little rings for his sisters. How he admires the house, says he has seen nothing equal to it since he left us.

His father whispered to him: "I suppose not, as you have passed your time aboard ship or in South Africa."

"Just you wait, dad, till you see what South Africa has done for you. I could not bring it in my pocket like the rings, but the elephant ivory in my boxes will shine in your museum nor will the tiger skins disgrace the polished floor of this noble hall. Besides that, there is a box of long waving curling ostrich plumes,

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

black for mother and cousin Debby, pink for Mollie and white for Sallie. Don't I know what best becomes a blonde and a brunette? Such a lovely contrast as you two girls make. There's Uncle Charley,—poor Uncle Charley, was he quite forgotten? Well, we shall see what we shall see."

Jerry spent the next few minutes in embracing and petting the twins, first one, then the other, then both together, but he evidently admires Sallie more than Mollie, which seems odd, but I suppose he has been among brunettes so long that a blonde is a rarity, though I must say Sallie did look pretty to-night, with her flushed cheeks. I remember Bridget improved; perhaps Sallie may.

Hastily,

Bathsheba.

P S. Jerry Junior says: "Tell Cousin Deborah she can't have her plumes unless she comes for them herself; they will be

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

put in the top drawer of her highboy." He says the worst thing about Africa is its distance from the hub.

November 25th, 1861.

Dear Deborah:

Lately I invited one of my old school-mates to visit us for I wanted to see what she would say to Sallie. She knew I had a pair of girl twins, but I had told her nothing more. Soon after her arrival a petite brunette entered the room. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "you are the very image of your mother as she used to look at school. Where is your sister? Can anyone tell you apart?" "Yes, very easily," was the reply. Just then a tall slender girl with a jimp little waist and heavily fringed eyes stood on the threshold. Those eyelashes will prove the sixteenth of an inch too long for the peace of mind of some one some time. My visitor sprang up in surprise, exclaiming, "Where did you get Bridget? She

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

has not grown an hour older, but rather, younger, not changed a particle since the days when in a school-girl's freak you set out to improve her, by hair and freckle lotions, dentistry, and pretty, half-worn frocks belonging to your tall chum, to say nothing of teaching her to walk and move like a lady. What a pet you did make of her! Well, we left school, and I, for one, forgot all about Bridget."

"That," said I impressively, "is my other twin!"

My guest was too much astonished to speak, but just stood and gazed at this vision of the Past. I said: "I don't wonder that you are speechless. It is the puzzle of my life. I invited you here partly to see if you would recognize the resemblance."

"Resemblance!" she cried, "It is not a resemblance. It is herself. I remember Bridget well, and there she stands; not a doubt about it. You can't get away from it."

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

"Yes," I replied: "I have tried to find Bridget, by advertisements and by every means in my power; I should so enjoy showing Sallie to her and hearing her milesian-like deliverance: 'Hooly Saints! And is it me own silf it is?'" The twins first opened their eyes on Independence Day, since then their time has been spent in opening other folks eyes to the odds in the difference.

Thy bewildered cousin,

Bathsheba.

December 31st, 1861.

Dear, dear cousin Deborah:

We have fulfilled the humbugging assertion of Uncle Jim that his money should go to found a "Home for Indigent Females." The home is built right here in our garden, as a sort of thank-offering on my part. There are a dozen old ladies already living there, who have most solemnly promised never to quarrel

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

with each other, and everything is going on swimmingly. The only thing we lack is a perfect matron to keep them up to their promise, or to pour oil on the troubled waters if storms arise, to teach them the spirit of the hive and to convince them that one bee alone can not make honey. My wise Jerry said: "Why not send for Cousin Deborah, now that her lifelong devotion to her mother is ended? Give her a winter's rest and recreation with us, then install her as our matron. No one could be better qualified. Tell her the Bible says it is not well for man to live alone, and that if I had written it I should have *embraced* the women. Moreover she can't *decline* the offer, for she has not yet reached her *declining* days." I hailed the proposal with delight. Now dear cousin nothing remains to be done but to pack up and come to thy loving Aunt Priscilla and to thy ditto first cousins Jerry, Bathsheba and Charley, and to thy ditto first cousins once

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

removed Jerry Junior, Mollie and Sallie, thus putting a period to my thirty years of letter writing by being always within speaking distance. Of course I shall make ample provision for thy future, with remainder to the Infirmary.

Lovingly,
Bathsheba.

P. S. In closing this most unreserved and intimate correspondence, my life passes before me in slow review. Turning back to my childhood I am reminded of a little cygnet hatched in a hen's nest, always at odds with its environment, paddling in the pond, while the chickens and turkeys were gazing in silent consternation, and the mother hen with ruffled plumage was clucking for its return to terra firma. Heavy dew was fatal to the turkey poults, and a shower killed the chickens unless they were gathered under their mother's wings; only ducks, geese and swans understood this passion

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

for deep sea bathing, and not one of them dwelt in the home farmyard. This allegory seems to me to explain some of the discrepancies between my life and my surroundings.

To my own father I was a changeling; he loved me in his serious, solemn way, but the disobedient, inquisitive child was something beyond his ken. Once in a state of exasperation after I had worn his nerves to a frazzle by propounding unanswerable questions, he scrawled an immense interrogation point with chalk on the drab paint of my chamber door, and wrote Bathsheba in small letters under it. In his sober musings in the silent Quaker Meetings no doubt he pondered his duty to his child, but from the radical difference in our natures never became much enlightened.

To my common sense mother I have ever been a disturbing element, a sort of comet darting through her well ordered solar system, crossing her orbit at an

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

unknown angle, almost plunging into the sun, then away again into the unknown regions of space, whence no man can compute the period of my return or the damage I may cause in my erratic career. From the day I appealed to her in the words of the forbidden Shakespeare and received the chilling rebuff: "I never heard such talk," accompanied with the threat to send me supperless to bed, an invisible but a cold something, very slight, very transparent, but very chill, a kind of screen of ice all through our two lives has glazed the medium through which we exchange intercourse. I presume chilled iron castings are all right, but chilled daughters,—never! I think the greatest surprise I ever gave her was when we moved into the new house, and I said very quietly but very decidedly: "I have always thought that father ought to have left the house and farm to thee; for that reason I have allowed thee to keep house and govern the

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

household. Now matters are changed, this place is mine, and I shall be its mistress. We love to have thee with us on that understanding, or if thee prefers to keep thy old home, thee is perfectly free to do so, there is plenty of money for both establishments. Choose which is most agreeable to thyself." This is the only time I ever saw mother taken aback. She was utterly dumbfounded, or as the twins say flabbergasted, but she loves me very dearly and after a struggle decided to remain here on a greatly reduced footing. It was hard for mother, she being the most inveterate housekeeper ever produced in these United States, and I the most uninvestate. There is one good thing about her living with us, she will never spoil her grandchildren.

My husband, my perfect Jerry, who loves me with a lifelong devotion, as rare as beautiful, often has recourse to his amended version of the Commodore's toast, making it a sort of working hypoth-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

esis: "My wife, may she always be right, but my wife, right or wrong." When I cut my fortune in pieces to divide with uncle Jim's unloved kindred, when I built a grand house for which he cared little, except for my delight in it, when I took up what must have seemed a whim to him, the building of Uncle Jim's Infirmary,—when I did all this, he asserted the fortune was mine to use as I chose. It was his part to help, to care for, to protect me. When he was in Mexico, it is not probable he cared to write flaming love-letters to his own wedded wife but I wished it and it was done with only occasional lapses to real life.

He has much humor as well as good humor, and that is a great bond between us. He would have been in his element as a jolly Canterbury pilgrim. Jerry interrupts me to say: "Bashy, paint me as Oliver Cromwell wanted to be painted, 'with the moles on.'"

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

Then I have another blind follower in thee, my cousin. Thee has no flights nor fancies of thy own, and watches mine with much astonishment and some admiration. There is hardly one of thy letters in existence, but I am sure every letter I ever wrote to thee has been carefully treasured, dated, docketed, filed and tied up with blue ribbon.

While I think of it, bring as much of thy furniture as thee wishes. There are five rooms belonging to the matron's suite. The furniture that is there can be stored in the attic, if thee prefers thy own.

They say Jerry Junior is my favorite child, and he deserves all the love I lavish on him, but in return he only caresses and pets me, tosses his cap in the air, catches it and says:

"Oh mother mine; what *are* you going to do next? Prepare my mind a little; remember my nerves are weak and my constitution fragile. If you aspire to the

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

Presidency I should like to be in your Cabinet as Secretary of the Navy."

Now my thoughts turn to the twins, dear little souls who all unwittingly caused me such cruel disappointment. Twins who have not one atom of romance in their whole composition. One of whom is the breathing image of a wild Irish girl who flitted across my path, and I do so love beauty, and did so long for two beautiful little girls, whom no one but myself could tell apart, and they are so different from each other that strangers never imagine they are sisters, to say nothing of twins. But they are both dear girls and my precious children.

Recollect when the teacher told the seniors my exuberant imagination would play me a scurvy trick some day? I suppose if that teacher should see Sallie he would be apt to say: "I told you so."

My brother in all his life has never taken me seriously. It is too late to

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

begin now. Thus it would appear I am fated to remain: *une femme incomprise*.

If anyone knows me, or is fitted by nature to understand me, it is my little Scotch terrier Flibbertigibbet, Imp or Tyke for short. Just see him scuttle off in pursuit, at the cry of "Rats!" when there are no rats, and in his inmost soul he knows there are no rats, only Charley's fingernails on the under side of the table. But the sibilant shout appeals to his excitable nature and off he scurries and scrambles with all the eagerness of reality. Then look at his facility of imagination which makes it real to him that he is shaking the life out of a rat when he is only destroying one of my old slippers. Why does this foolishness of Flibbertigibbet's find an echo in my bosom? Are we some kin? If he could talk he would have an immense deal to say to me, and I to him.

Well, Deborah, this is an unconscion-

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

ably long postscript, but the last one thee
will be bothered with from

Bathsheba.

My life is not ended yet, so let us hope
the queer little cygnet may in due time
attain to the swan's broad, white pin-
ions, and that in my melodious death
song I may soar away into the blue
empyrean.

The Last Word: Notwithstanding my
extraneous position in my family, my
life is a very happy one, and in my own
mind I often ridicule my freaks and fan-
cies. Come to think of it, here is a fine
opportunity for scoffing, for in this one
postscript I have compared myself to a
shaggy Scotch terrier, an erratic, nomadic
comet, and a snow-white swan. While
all that I really aspire to is summed up
in the one word *Love*. Just to be:

To Jerry a loving wife.

To the children a fond mother.

To Charley an affectionate sister.

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

To mother a dutiful daughter.
To thee a sister-cousin.
To my friends an amiable hostess.
To the neighbors an amusing and instructive
resource.
To the servants a kind mistress.
To the poor a lady bountiful to the extent of my
power.
To Uncle Jim's neglected relatives a generous
cousin.
To his Indigent Females a helping hand.
To the Great Creator of the Universe a humble,
adoring worshiper.
That is all there is of it:
The beginning of my first letter to thee, and the
end of my last, just *Love*.

Love! The loveliest word of all the
lovely words of Anglo-Saxon mintage.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

If any reader should inquire concerning
the future fate of this family whose life
story has been broken off so abruptly, I
am empowered by a little bird, who has
whispered the information in my ear, to

BATHSHEBA'S LETTERS

state that there was a letter addressed to the Monthly Meeting of Friends by Jerry and Bathsheba requesting to be reinstated in membership with the Society, also requesting membership for their minor children. They took this step because they heartily agreed with the new ideas of the Society in regard to the unimportance of the outward forms formerly so much insisted on. The religious part they had never doubted.

Charley married Jane Tompkins and several years later Jerry Junior wedded a lady with a foreign name, who proved to be a very congenial companion for Bathsheba, and when the row of white beds in the nursery were filled with sleeping cherubs our heroine had nothing left to wish for.

Cousin Deborah was for more than thirty years the much admired matron of "The Uncle Jim Hospital." Of her it was said, "She does not simply draw her breath and her salary, she draws all

TO HER COUSIN DEBORAH

hearts and fully justifies the love and confidence of her cousins."

Jerry was drafted in the civil war. He would not allow his wife to procure a substitute for him, saying no man should die in his stead. He marched away and when the war was over returned a general. Immediately on his return to private life he very sensibly dropped his title, which was a grief to Bashy who, when he was not present, often alluded to "The General."

The Twins are still living and unmarried. By her mother's will, Sallie is appointed the distributer of the large trust fund, which is to be applied for the relief of gentlefolk in reduced circumstances.

Jerry and Bathsheba died, deeply regretted, in their eighty-fifth year. Lovely and pleasant in life in death they were not divided. Bathsheba went first and within a month Jerry followed. What could he do but follow where she led?

1

